



FEMALE LEADERSHIP IN A FAROESE CONTEXT



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Abstract

The focus of this thesis is on female leadership in a Faroese context. The Faroe Islands are a small-scale society located in the North Atlantic. The country share a number of characteristics with other Nordic countries, however this thesis will emphasise on some of the areas, which make Faroese women differ from other Nordic women. Although the Faroe Islands have the highest employment rate compared to other Nordic countries, 57% of Faroese women work part-time jobs and less than a quarter of all leaders on the Faroese job market are women. This is an unexplored field of study and thus the aim of this thesis has become to explore this dimension even further by investigating whether Faroese women are meeting any barriers on the way up the corporate ladder and characterize possible barriers. The thesis takes on a balance between an inductive and deductive approach and conduct a research based on seven qualitative interviews. However, as the field of study is unexplored, the research is primarily inductively inspired in order to explore the theoretical ground.

The analysis acknowledges that Faroese women are meeting a set of barriers on their way up the corporate ladder. Firstly, these barriers come in cultural and personal forms and classified as general barriers for women globally. Secondly, the analysis identifies a number of barriers created as result of the Faroese structure of society. Briefly, the analysis find that traditional ways and significant Faroese circumstances are creating a number of barriers for Faroese women on the job market. The research suggests a new theoretical ground for a Faroese barrier – *comfort zone*. The significance about the finding is that they create foundation for further studies to the field and unfold a number of unstudied factors.

1 Introduction

Recent decades have resulted in a significant global progress promoting gender equality in the work force (Wirth 2001). Throughout history, men have been the driving force of organizations and consequently this tendency has primarily linked leadership to masculinity (Kanter 1993). Nonetheless, these presumptions have changed. A shift in gender attitudes and a disposition of western women entering the work field over the last decades has resulted in current western societies where women's participation in the labour force has increased (Hogg & Vaughan 2008). All over the world, women have entered professions and positions, which previously were reserved for men. Moreover, women have improved their qualifications by increasing their access to education and training (Wirth 2001). This progress is highly noticeable among the Nordic countries of Europe. In the early 60s, men dominated most university studies, and only every third student was a woman. However, statistics from 2013 find that 60% of all students at universities in the Nordic Countries today are women (Haagensen 2014:75).

Women's movements worldwide have achieved many improvements related to gender equality. Still, some results fall short of expectations. Throughout the world, men dominate leadership positions (Hogg & Vaughan 2008). A Global Gender Gap Report¹ (GGGR) from 2015 identifies how women only occupy 28% of leadership positions worldwide. Moreover, the report points out that in no more than four out of 145 countries, a higher number of women compared to men occupy leadership positions. This low number of female leaders receives growing attention as a great volume of studies suggest that gender equality in organizations boosts economic growth, productivity and welfare (With 2001). Furthermore, studies identify women as being just as qualified for leadership positions as men are, and consequently organizations should depend on a balance of masculine and feminine qualities (Hogg & Vaughan 2008).

1.1 The Faroese Context

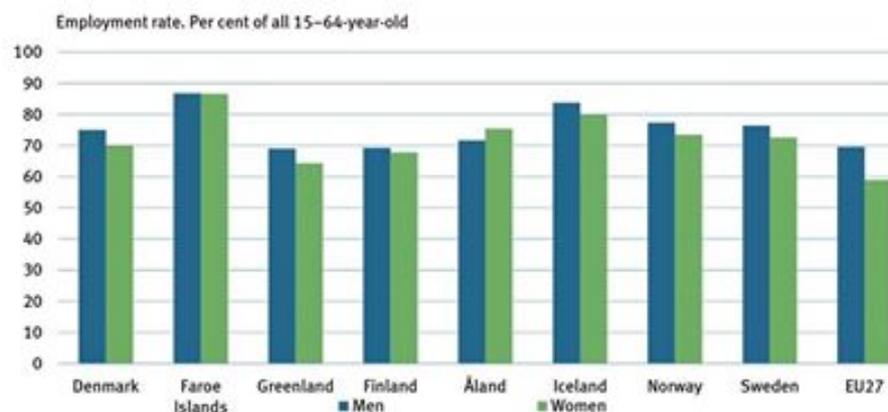
With standpoint in the title of this thesis, I want to grasp this topic of women and leadership positions and set it into a Faroese context. The simple size of 1.396 km² classifies the Faroe Islands as the smallest region among all the Nordic countries of Europe. The region embodies 18 small islands and is location between Iceland, The Shetland Islands and Norway. The volume of population is roughly 49.000 inhabitants and nearly half of the population lives in the capital, Tórshavn (Hagstova Føroya 2015:3). The Faroe Islands, Northern Coastal Norway, Iceland and Greenland are all peripheral countries in the North

¹ A study ranking 145 countries worldwide according to how well they are leveraging their female talent pool, based on economic, educational, health-based and political indicators.

Atlantic and mostly referred to as micro-societies due to their low number of inhabitants (Nilsson et al. 2010:6).

In the last couple of years, the Faroese society has roomed a debate on gender equality and female career development on the Faroese job market and business community. Matching the global movement, an increasing number of Faroese women have entered the job market and among the Nordic countries, the Faroe Islands have the highest employment rate of employment of men and women. Within the age group 15-64 years old, close to 88% of Faroese men and women are active in employment (NSY 2014:82²).

Graph 1: Employment rate. Per cent of all 15-64-year-old



In Finland and Denmark, women make up the majority of those in tertiary education. Moreover, there are over 1.5 women for every man enrolled in universities in Norway, Sweden and Iceland (GGGR 2015³). This movement is in the same way starting to appear among Faroese women. Within the age group 25-30, 29% of women and 23% of men are obtaining higher educations at tertiary levels (FIIF 2015:22).

Along with these movements, the Faroese political platform is rooming more women now than ever before. The Faroese Parliament has 33 members. In the last election⁴, 11 women entered the Parliament and in some political parties, this meant an equal division between female and male members. In 1915 Faroese women were given the right to vote and become candidates for elections for the first time. Since then, only 25 women ever been elected into the Faroese Parliament. Therefore, the fact that 11 women

² NSY: *Nordic Statistical Yearbook 2014*

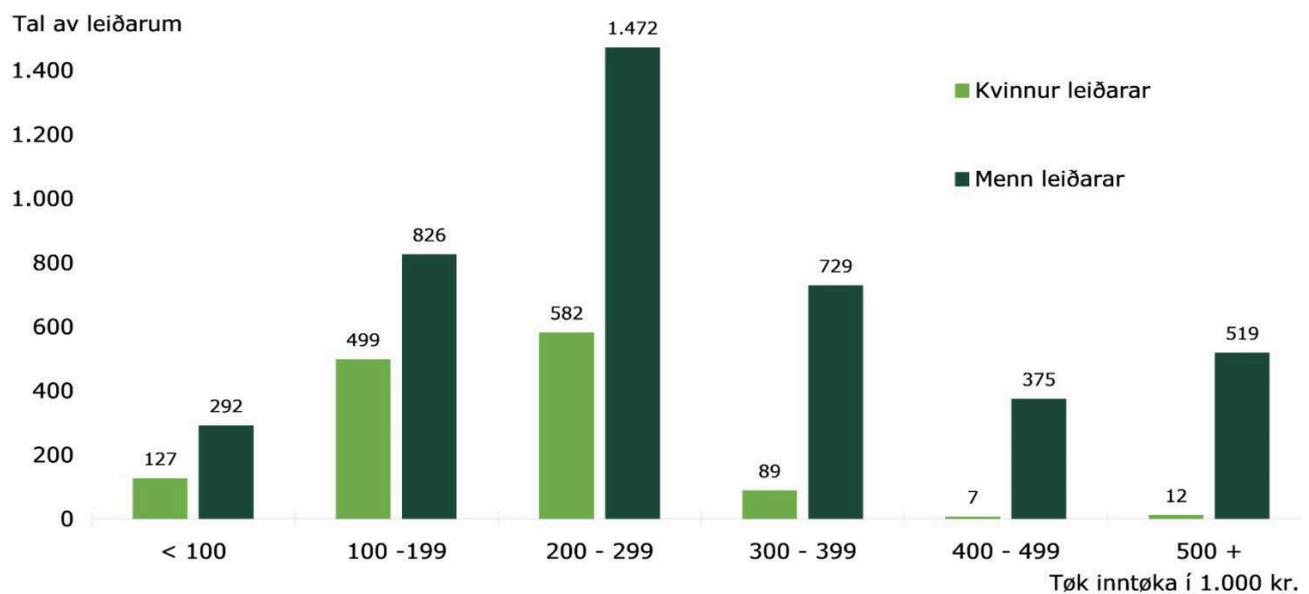
³ FIIF: *The Faroe Islands in Figures 2015*

⁴ September 2015

entered the Parliament after the last election is in itself a victory in terms of gender equalities (logtingid.fo & Nám 2016).

Nevertheless, in company with the global pattern, the number of female leaders on the Faroese job market is low. More than three-quarters of all leaders on the Faroese job market are men. Additionally, men earn sufficiently more than women do as 94% of all 1.731 Faroese leaders earning more than 300.000 DKK are men (Manntal 2011).

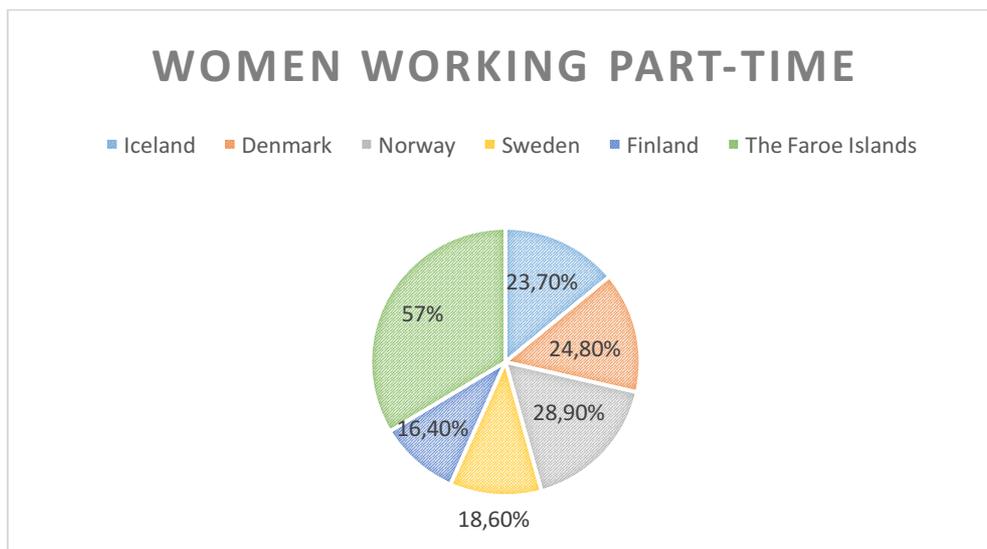
⁵Graph 2: Leaders and income divided into men and women within the age group 30-64.



However, I am, as researcher puzzled by another movement, which make The Faroe Islands stand out among other Nordic countries. Worldwide, it is a general tendency that more women than men work part-time jobs (Writh 2003). However, the number of Faroese women working part-time jobs is notably high compared to other Nordic countries - and in some cases twice as high. Among Faroese women, 57% are currently working part-time jobs. Among other Nordic women, closest to this number is Norway with 28.9% women working part-time jobs. However, with 16.4% of Finnish women working part-time jobs this creates a gap of a double amount of Faroese women than Finnish women working part-time jobs.

⁵ Translation from Faroese to English: Bright green = Kvinnur leiðarar *Female leaders*, Dark Green = Menn leiðarar *male leaders*. Tal av leiðarum *The number of leaders*, Tøk inntøka *Available income*. This graph is from a survey made by Manntal in 2011. In the survey a *leader* is referred to as someone who “has the right to enter into commitments and has managerial rights in regards to what workers should do in a workplace and what they should spend their time on”.

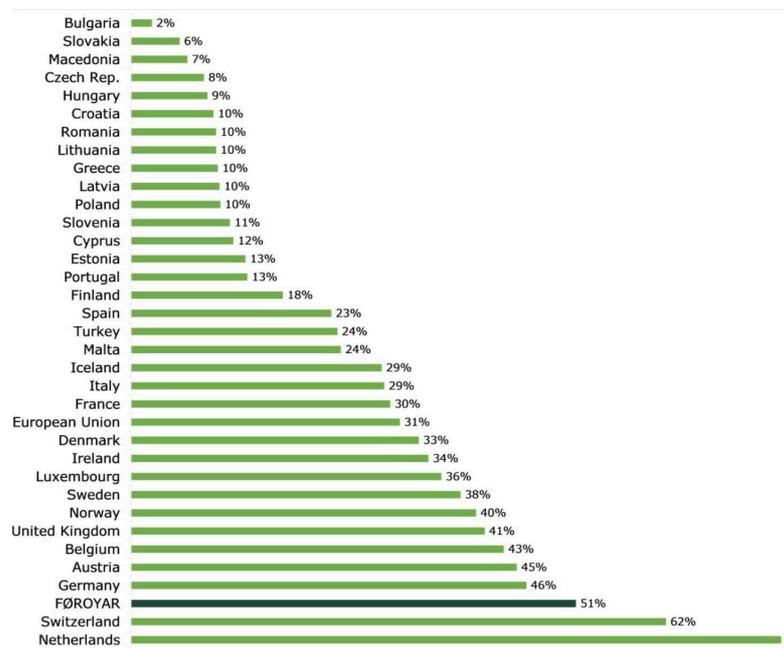
Graph 3: The number of women in the Nordic countries working part-time jobs in 2015⁶



Staying on the subject, another movement makes Faroese women differ from other Nordic women. As the number of women, working part-time jobs is decreasing in other Nordic countries, the number is increasing among Faroese women. A comparison of statistics from 2015 (graph 3) and 2011 (graph 4) identifies that the number of female women working part-time jobs has increased from 51% to 57%, while the number has decreased among other Nordic women in Denmark, Norway and Sweden.

⁶ Statistics from the Global Gender Gap Report 2015 & The Faroe Islands in Figures 2015

Graph 4: Women (aged 20-64) working part-time jobs in 34 European countries⁷.



This Faroese dimension of an unusual movement rooms a high employment rate among women, a low number of female leaders and a high increasing number of Faroese women working part-time jobs. This dimension puzzles me and thus, as researcher, I am motivated to explore this dimension further and investigate whether any Faroese factors might be shaping this movement and consequently detaching Faroese women from other Nordic women. In order to do so, this thesis will focus on female leadership in a Faroese context and explore factors related to this focus.

1.2 Problem Formulation

At the time being, there is limited research on the field of female leadership in a Faroese context. Additionally, there is no official statistics on women in leadership - except from graph 2, which the previous section introduced. Consequently, this area is somewhat unexplored. Based on this, I believe that female leadership in a Faroese context is in favour of further theorising and grounded research. In this thesis, *female leadership* refers to women, who have the right to enter into commitments and has managerial rights in regards to what workers should do in a workplace and on what they should spend their time (Manntal 2011).

⁷ Manntal 2011 (The dark green line shows the Faroese statistic)

To begin with, I examined several studies and theories on gender and leadership. Throughout this process, it became clear how there are many ways in approaching this research. In order to strengthen the validity of my approach and gain a first-hand account and understanding of the situation of female leadership in a Faroese context, the essential step at this stage became for the research to primarily take on an explorative and inductively inspired approach. In doing so, I will let material from a qualitative data collection frame the outcome of this research.

My ambition as researcher is to talk to Faroese women, who are already - or have been - in leadership positions on the Faroese job market. By identifying this target group as valuable for this investigation, the focus is on their experiences and perspectives. Consequently, new theoretical ground is explored through empirical data. The empirical data of this research is seven qualitative interviews with Faroese women who have experiences in different levels of leadership positions on either the private or public Faroese job market. The research adopts an explorative inductive approach in which the respondents are of great significance. Moreover, the research also takes on a deductive position as a theoretical framework is applied. The purpose of this framework is help me as researcher to identify significant factors and barriers related to women climbing up the corporate ladder. The balance between an inductive and deductive approach is valuable for the research in order to gain a nuanced insight into the unexplored field of study. However, the main goal is to gain insight into the participants' experiences and perspectives and for the outcome of the empirical data to construct a theoretical ground from which to proceed with further theorising of the field.

The previous section points out a contrast between the high employment rate among Faroese women and the high increasing number of Faroese women working part-time jobs. Furthermore, this dimension is set in context with the low number of women in leadership positions. It is of interest to this thesis to investigate this contrast further and gain insight into explanations for the low number of women in leadership positions. Consequently, the thesis will investigate whether any type of barriers are causing this low number and whether the unusual movement in the Faroese dimension might be a barrier on its own.

1.3 Research Question

Do Faroese women meet any barriers on their journey up the corporate ladder, and if so, what characterises these barriers?

1.4 Limitations

This research question has been the focus of this thesis throughout the whole process. However, the research started out with a second research question: *To what extent is there foundation for establishing a Faroese female network, which targets newly educated women on the Faroese job market?* The aim of this additional research question was to provide a solution to how to create greater access and opportunities for newly educated women on the Faroese job market and consequently encourage more women to enter highly ranked jobs.

However, throughout the process of data collection and data analysis it became clear to me that this additional research question was too detached from the main research question and distracted the research from the focus. I realised how the two research questions were too different and in fact were two separate studies in one study. Due to these challenge and disadvantage, I decided that the thesis will concentrates on the main research question alone.

On a different note, this thesis will limit itself down to female leadership and possible barriers related to this matter. Consequently, the thesis will not include ideas regarding focuses on the large female outmigration in the Faroe Islands. Moreover, political movements will be included into a limited extend.

Theoretically, the thesis will limit itself down to theories and studies related to cultural, personal and organizational barriers. As a result, the thesis will not focus on other theories related to female leadership as a discipline.

2 Theoretical Framework

The purpose of this thesis is to provide a nuanced and inductive examination of whether Faroese women are meeting any barriers on their way up the corporate ladder. This is an unexplored field in a Faroese context and the aim of this research is to explore new theoretical ground and concepts. The objective of this theoretical chapter is therefore to bring about a starting point for this inductive research. It is important to stress how this theoretical framework is not a definite guide as the empirical data essentially guides the outcome of this research. Rather, this theoretical framework will help the research identifying general global barrier to this field of study. As result, the process of analysis will independently identify possible barriers among Faroese female leaders.

The pattern of few women entering leadership positions is by many associated with the concept of '*the glass ceiling*'. This concept seeks explanations for why the number of women in top leadership positions remains notably low worldwide. The theory identifies a number of barriers, which women are likely to meet on their way towards top leadership positions. Moreover, the concept suggest that women are - regardless of qualifications and achievements - unable to climb up the corporate ladder due to these invisible and unspoken barriers, too strong to be broken. (Oakley 2000). The sources for this framework come down to academic work and theories related to this concept of 'the glass ceiling'.

Theories of the glass ceiling mainly divide barriers into social barriers and organizational barriers. In addition, academics point out further barriers, which come down to personal aspects. Therefore, in order to create an overview and brief summary of the barriers, this framework will describe two main dimensions of each barrier and divide the sections into cultural barriers, personal barriers and organizational barriers.

2.1 Cultural barriers

The cultural dimension of the glass ceiling are applicable for most women and have foundation in upbringing, traditions and patterns. These dimensions are rooted in current societies and since individuals cannot influence these, changing them often takes years (Geary 2003). Socialization and gender roles are identified as major components of the glass ceiling and the following section will briefly unfold these.

2.1.1 Socialization and Communication

According to Oakley, explanations for the low number of women in top management goes beyond common practices and into the impact of gender-based behavioural dynamics (Oakley 2000:324). Essentially, there are biological differences, which influence the way individuals interact with the external environment. Decades of empirical research have confirmed differences in the social behaviour of men and women in every culture, in which studied (Geary 2003:1).

When comparing boys and girls, affiliations, expectations and motivational tendencies often differ. Most commonly, boys arrange themselves in larger social group than girls do and tend to engage in coalitional competition, form dominance hierarchies and assert their individual identity within the group. This competition is often in forms of showing role differentiation and specialization. In cases of two or more groups, in-between competition is often engaged (Geary 2003:9). Most girls, on the other hand, prefer dyadic social relationships, expose high levels of emotional support, and emphasise cooperation and equality. By this, they provide help and guidance in solving problems and exchange in-depth sharing (Geary 2003; Hogg & Vaughan 2008:577).

In an ethnological study from 1987, Savin-William observed girls and boys at a summer camp and studied sex differences in hierarchy formation. He observed that in the boys' camp, which lasted for four weeks, dominant hierarchies and friendships quickly were formed within each cabin of boys. Once these hierarchies were set, conflicts were at the minimal and numbers of coalitional activities, such as games and sports competitions between the cabins of boys, increased. By the end of the summer camp, the dominating boys in each cabin were, with an implicit approval from the other boys in the group, successfully and effectively controlling group activities and still engaged with everyone within the group (Geary 2003:16). The girls' camp started out a with a relatively stable cohesive group dominance structure. However, the structure was not rigid or hierarchical and in contrast to the boys' increasingly strong structure, across time the structure in the girl's cabins became more and more unstable. By the end, most of the groups has split into cliques largely based on status in popularity, sociability or athletics. Frequently, dominant girls separated themselves from the group and formed dyads relationships with a friend (Geary 2003:17; Savin-William & Paikoff 1987:419).

This study suggests that objectives to why boys refine their competencies in early childhood become a necessity in order to create competitive coalitions in adulthood. Dyadic activities for girls however, helps them control social dynamics and develop social skills needed in order to form relationships, which might benefit them and their children (Geary 2003:16).

In every culture studied, girls and boys are found to split into same-sex groups (Geary 2003:14) Since this socialization of children takes form in divided groups, women and men often take possession of different styles of interaction and communication and bring these along into adulthood (Hogg & Vaughan 2008:577). Based on studies by Carol Gilligan, Deborah Tannen observed how many girls are socialised to believe that putting themselves forward and being too confident will make them unpopular among peers. If a girl calls attention to herself within a group of girls, she will be excluded from the group. Thus, in order to avoid this girls learn to express themselves in ways, which meets their own needs as much as other people's needs. On the other hand, it is expected of boys, that they underline their status and use language, which highlights their abilities and knowledge (Oakley 2000:325). Tannen argues, that as a result of these habits, learned in early childhood socialization women are, in corporate life, less likely than men to engage in behaviour, which is self-promoting (Oakley 2000:324). The drive for seeking high ranked positions requires confidence and self-promotion and if women are culturally influenced to believe that self-promotion will result in them being excluded from their social group, they will not apply for high ranked positions (Oakley 2000:330).

2.1.2 Gender roles

The evolutionary factors between men and women explain some of the barriers, which women meet on their journey up the corporate ladder. However, many gender studies stress that *gender* is socially constructed and a result of social definitions. Billing argues that the way gender roles are defined comes down to stereotypical beliefs by society. Thus, beliefs about what it means to be a man and what it means to be a woman are constructed and implemented in upbringing and not given by nature (Billing 2005).

Supporting this argument, Lise Elliot argues that there is little solid evidence supporting that sex differences in children are innate or inborn. According to Lise Eliot, parents often desire the classical gender roles in upbringing, which consequently produces sex differences in adult behaviour and brains. She does not reject that there are some types of inborn differences but stresses that these are insignificant and parents reaction to these produce differences in adult behaviour (Begley 2009).

To support this argument, Eliot used the phrase *Pink brain and blue brain* and - among other examples - argues that the differences also come down to gender conformity. She stresses that while it is generally believed that toy preferences in children are clear from start, children actually do not settle into sex-based play preferences before they are at the age of one. Before this, both sexes prefer the same types of toy. However, guided by parents claims, they are often introduced to a certain type of toys before this age and thus produced brains with different talents, denying boys and girls their full potential (Ibid).

Another example, which Eliot sheds light on, is a disguised-gender experiment, which asked mothers to make estimations of how steep a slope their 11-month old babies could crawl. Even though there are no differences in motor skills in 11-month old girls and boys, it became evident throughout the experiment that mothers of the girls underestimate their ability to crawl down the slope compared to mothers of the boys. That might indicate that the parents treat their children, unconsciously, shapes the children's experiences and activities. Consequently, children will bring these experiences into adulthood and if a woman is brought up to believe that she cannot accomplish the same things that men can, this might reflect differences in women's and men's ambitions and self-esteem in later life (Begley 2009; Eliot 2011).

2.2 Personal barriers

Various studies suggest that one of the most challenging personal barriers for women is finding a balance between working-life and family-life. Moreover, other personal barriers such as interest and ambitions can become influential. The relevance of focusing mainly on these types of personal barriers is that since the Faroe Islands are bound to traditional ways these personal barriers will potentially emerge from the empirical data.

2.2.1 The balance between working life and family life

The division of time and balance between work and family is significant when explaining main differences of work patterns of men and women. There are a number of expectation about women having the main responsibilities in household and family life and thus, these expectation and long working hours will create a personal conflict for some women who take on a career-orientated path (Wirth 2001:17). Statistics point out that it is easier for men to have both a family and career than it is for women. Despite the fact that men are beginning to take greater share in domestic duties in some countries, studies show that on a general term, there is an inequality in the hours, which women and men spend on household and domestic tasks (Wirth 2001:18). A study by Linehan & Walsh in 1999 highlight that expectations of motherhood and domestic duties are not simply set by society but also by women themselves. The drive of finding balance between working life and family life is challenging and has resulted in terms like 'super-woman' – a term describing how women drive towards having it all by equally managing both positions.

2.2.2 Ambitions and interest

The cultural section of this theoretical framework suggests how it becomes necessary for boys to refine their competencies in early childhood in order to create competitive coalitions in adulthood. Dyadic activities for girls however, helps them control social dynamics and develop social skills needed in order to form relationships, which might benefit them and their children (Oakley 2003). Dimensions of these gender behaviour dynamics as well as stereotyping and gender roles might result in women genuine not believing that they are fit for leadership positions. In a study by Jackson in 2001 women were to rate their abilities for high ranked positions. Only 53% of the women found themselves able to reach top positions despite the fact that 66% of them believed that they hold required qualities for top positions. Moreover, elements of upbringing can influence women's competitive skills. In the cultural section, Elliot highlights classical gender roles in upbringing, which consequently produces sex differences in adult behaviour and brains. Thus, the way girl are brought up might influence how competitively orientated they are compared to men (Begley 2009).

Labour is, according to Billing, not neutral to men and women. By this, she argues that because it is expected of women to have main responsibility of family life and household, they have difficulties managing a high ranked job, which often is time and resource demanding (2005). On the contrary, Barnett argues that there are more positive effects than negative one related to women, who work. By this she points out that earning money, managing challenging tasks, receiving social confirmation and making use of one's talents are all examples of positive effects relates to working women. In other words, the more roles a woman can manage, the happier she will be on various aspects of life (2004).

On a different note, women might not prioritize top leadership positions since long working hours and great engagement and insight into an organization might not be as appealing to women that it is to men (Jackson 2001). Related to this, Christensen claims that due to biological differences, women are simply more interested in being mothers than they carrier orientated (2012).

2.3 Organizational barriers

Corporate policies, promotion and stereotyping are often identified as major elements of the glass ceiling barring women from making it to the top (Oakley 2000:323). The following section will unfold main elements of corporate practices and stereotyping.

2.3.1 Corporate practices

The section on personal barriers identified main differences of work patterns of men and women. Another factor, which this section will pay attention to, is occupational segregation, as women remain occupied in limited range of occupations despite the fact that proportions of labour active women have increased in the last decades (Wirth 2001). Research by ILO (International Labour Office) has found that worldwide approximately half of all worker are in gender-stereotyped occupations or so-called “male” and “female” jobs (Ibid). Not only do men and women have different types of jobs. Women’s representations in top positions also differs and frequently men occupy top positions in occupations mainly dominated by women. However, it appears that Scandinavian women are twice more likely to break through to higher management than other European women are (Ibid). Baron-Cohen explains this pattern by arguing that women’s brain by nature are programmed to feel empathy while men’s brain are programmed to understand constructions and systems. As result, women naturally become good consultants, advisors, nurses and so on (2003). On the contrary, Billing does however stress that the occupational segregation does not come down to biology but rather comes down to what upbringing and socially has constructed to be “male-jobs” and “female-jobs” (2005).

A top management position demands great engagement and insight into the concerned organization. Therefore, some study highlight the unfortunate potential that a female leader is absent from the organization for a period due to pregnancy or parental leave. With the term, *the democratization of motherhood* Hovden (et al. 2011) stresses the importance of organizations focusing on rights and options for women in matters of motherhood. However, the term also emphasises a risk linked to this focus and a negative influence on a woman’s’ carrier. In situations of recruitment and promotion, this focus on a female leader potentially leaving the position in some periods might unconsciously result in discrimination of women in top positions. In other words, the risk of democratization of motherhood is that all women will be categorised as potentially being absent from their top position for periods at the time (Hovden 2011).

2.3.2 Stereotyping & Leadership Style

In an organizational context, there are often a certain set of expectations regarding leaders’ qualities and behaviour. Even though many studies have found that there are few differences in inborn abilities of male and female leaders, the stereotypical idea is that leaders are men (Oakley 2000). In 1973, Edgar Schein conducted a study, which examined links between typical male and female characteristics and desired

characteristics of an ideal leader. An equal number of women and men took part in the study, which clearly identified a coherence between typical male characteristics and desired qualities of leaders (Schein 1973).

Apart from personal characteristics, there are a number of stereotypical ideas regarding how men and women dress, talk and appear. Studies in Western countries have identified differences in linguistic style between women and men (Hogg & Vaughan 2008:576). In spite of this being highly context-dependent, women are, on a general basis, believed to be more polite, emotional, positive, supportive and less confident in their methods of communication (Ibid). Deborah Tannen argues that working in hierarchical systems often requires compositions of authority, which makes linguistics styles essential. According to Tannen, women are less likely to claim authority and therefore often fail in managing up (Oakley 2000:325). Many women seek problem solving and collective solutions rather than giving orders, and some might identify this method of communication as weak and not suitable for leaders (Ibid). Therefore, in order to avoid this problem many women in male-dominated management positions adopt a more command-oriented male linguistic style. This often results in *double binds*, which is a phenomenon of a behavioural norm. Typical double bind for female leaders is that in order to be taken seriously, she positions an authoritative and tough attitude. Nevertheless, this is often challenging, as women will spend much effort on finding a balance and consequently drain energy from important tasks (Oakley 2000:325).

Moreover, another stereotypical idea, which can have a negative influence of women in leadership, is an attractive appearance. Studies have shown how attractive women on a general basis do not get as positive evaluations and promotions as less attractive women do (Oakley 2000).

A Harvard case study by Frank Flynn supports the idea that stereotyping influences how women and men are perceived. In the study, Flynn divided a classroom into two groups and provided them with a case on a Silicon Valley entrepreneur. One of the groups received the original case, which talked about Heidi Roizen. The other group received the same case but with the name being changed into Howard Roizen. Before the class meeting, Flynn asked the students to go online and rate 'Roizen' on several dimensions. Results from the study showed that Heidi and Howard were rated equally competent and effective; still the students were harsher on Heidi and disliked her aggressive personality. The student evaluated Heidi as selfish and unlikeable and in a corporate world, they would not hire her or work with her (Toegel & Barsoux 2012).

3 Methodology

The purpose of this study is to gain insight into an unexplored field of study and unfold a nuanced understanding of experiences and perspectives, which Faroese female leaders have on women and leadership positions on the Faroese job market. The theoretical framework, which inspires this inductive process, relates to possible barriers, which women frequently meet on their way up the corporate ladder. As the Faroe Islands are characterised as a small-scale society, female leadership in a Faroese context might result in different types of barriers than in larger countries. Therefore, it is of interest for this research to investigate, what types of barriers are present among Faroese female leaders – if any. For this purpose, the following research question guides the research:

Do Faroese women meet any barriers on their journey up the corporate ladder, and if so, what characterises these barriers?

3.1 My Epistemological Approach

Social science makes sense of how the world is socially constructed. As people construct their social world, behaviour is not determined. As a result, we can identify how given factors will increase the likelihood for a given outcome - but never achieve deterministic explanations. In other words, findings and studies can improve probabilistic explanations without ever achieving complete explanations (De Vaus 2009:5). Therefore, in contrast to natural science fields of study, findings within social science will not provide universal truths or general laws but rather be a search for meaning (Andersen 2005:160).

The epistemological position guiding this research is based upon the tradition of *social constructivism*, referring to the idea that the mental world - or experienced realities – are constructed and not discipline-bound. This provides a horizontal perspective and enables researchers to include a variety of disciplines and topics to their study (Riegler 2012:236). This position asserts how social actors perform social phenomena and meanings in a continuous state of revision. Thus, emotions, understandings and meanings are not just in the minds of people but constructed in social relations, for instance in interviews (Bryman 2012). Therefore, this standpoint is relevant for this research as a contextual understanding of meanings and insight applied to the question of female leadership in the Faroe Islands makes it possible for the researcher to enter unexplored levels of insight into Faroese women's experiences and perspectives of the field.

Critiques claim how the position of social constructionism can result in a research with a lack of validity. This concern stresses how understandings of social actors from a subjective position can cause flawed analyses (Bryman 2012). For the sake of validity, I will keep these critical points in mind throughout the analysis. However, the observer plays a major role in inductive research and neither researcher nor participants can remain neutral throughout the process, which naturally will involve some degree of subjectivity. Therefore, the outcomes will depend upon choices and interactions between researcher and participants (Bryman 2012). On the other hand, subjective constructions in this matter might be just as important to understand and study as objective constructions.

3.2 The Balance of Two Research Strategies

The purpose of this research is to access empirical data, which can unfold and explore new theoretical ground in relation to the unexplored field of female leadership in a Faroese context. An inductive approach allows researchers to do so (Bryman 2012:26) and therefore the original idea for this research was to have it primarily inductive. However, it soon became evident to me how a dual research strategy with an inductive approach and a deductive approach would create stronger validity to the research.

As the problem formulation encourages an open mind set and the field of study is unexplored, this research has an inductive foundation and approach. However, according to Maaløe (2009:100) investigating a social phenomenon without any theoretical background knowledge can result in the researcher not being able to capture important studied phenomena, as the researcher might not know what to observe or look for. The abstract concept of female leadership makes it problematic for this research to focus exclusively on an inductive approach and therefore this research is in favour of a balance between an inductive approach and a deductive approach. Moreover, this balance between an inductive and deductive approach gives me as researcher the option to look forward and backward throughout the process. Looking forward, I might be able to identify newly emerging patterns, concepts and theoretical ground as results from the empirical data. Looking backwards however, enables me to discover potential advantages or weaknesses of the current theoretical framework (Maaløe 2009:90).

However, I want to stress that the theoretical framework is no in any way fixed and I am prepared that there might not be correlation between the theoretical framework and the results from the empirical data. The main purpose of applying the deductive approach to provide this research with a starting point while the empirical data essentially guides the outcome of the research. In other words, the theoretical framework and problem formulation simply set out an entry point to the unexplored field of female leadership in a Faroese context and are not to be counted for as a definite guide (Maaløe 2009:133).

3.3 The Research Design

The purpose of a research design is to simplify the process of research by identifying choices of collection and analyses of data. The aim of any researcher is to answer a proposed problem formulation and thus an outline of the research design becomes essential (De Vaus 2001:9).

Generally, there is link between a research strategy and a problem formulation (Antoft 2012:51). This research employs a qualitative case study design. According to Bryman, this provides the researcher in-depth examination as a case study: “...entails the detailed and intensive analysis of a single case” (2012:66). Moreover, Yin (1994:13) argues how a case study design is often relevant as research strategy when the boundary between the studied phenomenon and its context is ambiguous.

The relevance of employing a case study design is that the case in this research is eight women on the Faroese job market, which all have experiences in different levels of leadership positions on either the private or public market. In order to gain insight and perspective on the area of female leadership in a Faroese context, focus is essentially on these women and their experiences. An intensive and detailed analysis will thus come down to empirical data from this target group and consequently frame the results and discussion of this research.

As research strategy, a case study design does not limit itself to specific types of data techniques, such as documents, interviews or statistics. A case study design encourages a complex and specific insight into fields of study. Thus, by not excluding potential sources of data and including various types of techniques, the researcher is likely to gain control and broad insight into the chosen field of study. Besides, an open technique strategy and data from various sources can result in an expanded number of reflections towards a studied phenomenon (Glaser & Strauss 1967:68). This research will draw on three different types of data resources:

- Qualitative interviews
- Statistics
- Literature review

The purpose of the research is to investigate whether Faroese women are meeting any barriers on their way up the corporate ladder and identify possible barriers. In order to answer this problem formulation, the research is primarily inductively inspired and takes foundation in the experiences and perspectives of

current female leaders on the Faroese job market. As a result, the main source of data collection is empirical data from qualitative interviews. A transcription of the interviews will divide the data into themes, which consequently results in a thematic analysis. New theoretical ground is since constructed in accordance with the empirical data.

Moreover, as mentioned in section 2.4., a theoretical framework marks a starting point for the research and will help the researcher guide the research and capture the studied phenomena. This theoretical framework includes secondary literature in the form of articles, scientific papers and academic books.

3.4 The Qualitative Interviews

A case holds many potential fields of study and therefore it is essential for the researcher to define the central subject problem for the chosen research. The central subject problem for this research is to investigate female leadership on the Faroese job market and explore to what extent cultural, organizational and personal barriers are causing a low number of female top leaders. The problem formulation guiding this research sets out to communicate experiences and perspectives of the participants and thus encourages an explorative approach towards the field. As result, qualitative interviews are relevant for this research as these:

- a) Look at social meanings rather than scientific explanations
- b) Understand the world from the respondents' point of view
- c) Unfold meaning, which are related to the experiences of the respondents

(Kvale 2009:140)

Interviews are a social construction between researcher and respondent, and a main focus for a qualitative researcher is to unfold a respondents' perspective. As result, qualitative interviews tends to avoid too much structure in order to unfold these perspectives in a most genuine way as well as to allow for new aspects and concepts to come forth (Bryman 2012:403).

There are different types of qualitative interviews and they all serve different purposes. In-depth interviews are applied for this research and according to Boyce & Neale this type of interview is: "...a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program, or situation" (2006:3). The reason for choosing in-depth interviews comes down to the potentiality of accessing broad, complex and unexplored levels of insight. In-depth interviews are useful when wanting to explore new issues in

depth. As limited research is on the field of female leadership on the Faroe Islands, in-depth interviews will enable me, as researcher, to access core material and answer the problem formulation (Andersen 2005:168 & Boyle 2006:3).

The interviews involve a degree of structure, as a brief list of topics was prepared beforehand. However, the interviews primarily gave room for each respondent to pursue topics, which were of particular interest to them. Moreover, the interview picked up unconsidered topics, which the respondents brought to the table. This supports my position of doing a grounded research, where theoretical ground and concepts are generated from collected data (Bryman 2012:387).

3.5 The Interviews Process

In the following I will describe the process of how I have prepared myself for the interview process, how the interviews are conducted in practice as well as my reflections on the matter.

3.5.1 Recruitment & Presentation of Sample

From the beginning of the thesis, I am aware of the challenge of having to decide what type of respondents would fit the best for this exact collection of data. As mentioned, I am interested in the female perspective on this matter and therefore decided to contact women, who have some type of experiences within the field of organizational leadership on the Faroese job market. The relevance of aiming for this target group comes down to the potential that the group might unfold unexplored understanding of challenges, which women might meet on their way up the corporate ladder. Aiming for women, who already have experiences and perspectives on this matter in a Faroese context, provides insight into the root of the problem formulation.

The approach of getting interviews with women from this target group resulted in seven interviews made in March 2016. Originally, the aim was to conduct ten interviews. However, two of the women contacted did not reply to the invitation. Moreover, one interview had to be excluded from the data analysis due to technical problems. Six of the interviews are conducted face-to-face in the Faroe Islands and the remaining two interviews were arranged over Skype and telephone. This recruitment of respondents resulted in the following sample:

Graph 5: The respondents

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Age group</i>	<i>Type of interview</i>	<i>Interview length</i>
R1	50s	Face-to-face (03.03.2016)	30 minutes
R2	40s	Face-to-face (08.03.2016)	24 minutes
R3	30s	Face-to-face (08.03.2016)	53 minutes
R4	30s	Face-to-face (09.03.2016)	19 minutes
R5	50s	Face-to-face (09.03.2016)	16 minutes
R6	30s	Skype (14.04.2016)	24 minutes
R7	40s	Telephone (28.03.2016)	45 minutes

The Faroe Islands are a small-scale society and relations are thus often close. In order to avoid compromising the respondents' anonymity, the respondents are named R1, R2, R3 etc. There is also the option to give them made-up names however, in the process of transcription, I started out naming the respondents with numbers and this gave a better overview in the process of data analysis as well. Therefore, for practical reasons, I decided to keep these titles through the whole process. Also due to anonymity, the women are divided into age group instead of giving information about their exact age.

An inclusion of a varied group of respondents increases the validity of a study (Maaløe 1996:220). In order to access a diverse and broad collection of data I decided to add variety to the group of respondents. This resulted in interviews with women from different levels of leadership positions on both the private and public sector.

Graph 6: The respondent’s leadership experiences

<i>Participants</i>	<i>Experiences in leadership positions</i>
R1	Currently managing her own company. 10 years of experience in department leadership on the private marked.
R2	Currently top manager within the public sector. 14 years of experience as CEO on the private marked.
R3	CEO on the private marked – 4 years of experience in the field
R4	Department manager within the public sector – 4 years of experience in the field
R5	Experience in leadership on the political platform
R6	Department manager on the private marked – 8 years of experience in the field
R7	Experience in leadership on the public marked

Additionally, I decided to interview a number of women, who have experiences in leadership position but also might hold other perspectives on the Faroese job marked as a whole. This resulted in one politician, one governmental representative and one journalist. Again, in order to avoid compromising the respondent’s anonymity the figure does not supply this information but only experiences of leadership positions.

Figure 2 identifies how four of the respondents have experience in leadership positions on the private marked, two have experience on the public marked, while one of the respondents has experience in leadership positions on the private and public marked.

The interview with R5 differs from the other interviews in structure as it became clear at the very start of the interview how the position of this respondent was not as relevant to the collection of data as the other interviews were. However, I have chosen to include the interview as there were still some valid points given at this brief interview that I estimated as valuable for the process of analysis.

3.5.2 Preparations Before and After The Interviews

In order to gain contact to respondents for the interview, I sent them an invitation by either e-mail or telephone call. An introduction to the study became part of the invitations, as I briefly explained the focus of my research and outlined how I imagined that the interview would be in the style of a casual conversation. In addition, I made it clear to the respondents how I was flexible in relation to time and

location. As result, the six face-to-face interviews were conducted in either the respondents' homes or offices.

When making qualitative interviews, the researcher aims for in-depth material and therefore the first couple of minutes of an interview becomes essential. Before asking respondents to open up about experiences and perspectives, it is important to create an atmosphere of trust. Therefore, before starting the interview, I began the process of interviewing by providing a briefing about myself as researcher and the purpose of the study. In this briefing, I emphasized that the interview was going to be anonymous and not be used in any other context. In addition, I asked for permission to record the interviews and stressed how the recording was only going to be used in the process of transcription. Furthermore, I stated that I had a few unstructured questions but as a whole, the interview was going to be like a casual conversation and my primary interest was in their experiences and perspectives on this matter. Lastly, the respondents were given the option to ask any questions related to the study or interview before I started recording (Kvale 2009:148).

After having opened up about a subject and shared personal material, the respondents might have difficulties letting go of these topics once the interview has ended. Therefore, after the last question and once the recording has stopped, I finishes with a debriefing. By this, the respondent has the options to share further thoughts on the subject or ask further questions about the study and procedures. If the participant does bring any interesting points out during this process of debriefing the researcher should, for ethical reasons, ask for permission to use these in the analysis (Kvale 2009:149). In these cases however, this did not become necessary as most of the respondents spend this time asking questions about the research and myself.

3.5.3 The Interview Guide

As grounded theory emphasizes the importance of, the interviews of this research did not start out with too many preconceptions. Thus, the interview guide for this research includes a brief list of topic areas. After the briefing (*section 3.5.2: Preparations before and after the interviews*) I began each interview by asking the open-ended question: *Could you tell me about your experiences in leadership?* After the opening question, I was focusing on being a good guide and focus on the topics, which the respondents brought up. Thus, my primary role as an interviewer became to be a guide and listener (Atkinson 1998). However, the following graph introduces some of the questions or topics, which were prepared before the interviews and included in most of them.

Graph 7: The Interview guide

Topic 1	Barriers
Example of related question:	<i>In your opinion, are Faroese women meeting any barriers on the job market – such as social, cultural or organizational?</i>
Topic 2	Women working part-time jobs
Example of related question:	<i>57% of Faroese women are working part-time jobs – have you any thought on this matter?</i>
Topic 3	Gender quotation
Example of related question:	<i>What are your thoughts on gender quotation – should it be applied to a Faroese or not?</i>
Topic 4	Networking
Example of related question:	<i>What are your thoughts and experiences of Faroese professional networks?</i>

3.6 Data Analysis

Quantitative researchers generally use methods of analysis, which are standardized. Qualitative analysis, on the other hand, do not follow homogeneous procedures. Kvale emphasizes this point by claiming how there is no main road towards qualitative analysis as each analysis is dependent on a researcher's problem formulation (2009:190). However, one of the most common approaches in analysing qualitative data entails thematic analysis. This section will describe the data analysis of this research in relation to transcriptions and thematic analysis.

3.7.1 The Process of Transcription

Transcribing interviews from spoken into written language is a process, which is argued to improve the process of analysis. Thus, this becomes the first step in the process of analysis.

Registrations of interviews and analysis often come down to methods of recording. As a result, the interviewer can fully concentrate on the subjects and dynamics of the interview (Kvale 2009:200). During

the process of the seven interviews, I audio recorded each interview and took brief notes. (Bryman 2012:481).

There are a number of advantages related to the method of recording and transcribing interviews. In comparison to purely taking notes or relying on memory, recordings allows the interviewer to correct natural limitations of our memories and glosses, examine the material repeatedly, allowing for the data to be reused as well as allowing for an absolute examination of conversations (Bryman 2012:482).

As with any social research, there are limitations to this method of analysis. One disadvantage with transcribing interviews is that the process is time-consuming. Therefore, beforehand I set sufficient time aside for transcriptions (Bryman 2012:484; Boyle & Neale:4).

Another disadvantage comes down to converting spoken language into written language. Qualitative research is not purely interested in what interviewees say but also in the way, they say things (Bryman 2012:482). The process of transcription means transforming a material from one form into another. An interview is a conversation between two people and thus a social interaction, which often includes matters of tempo, body language, vocal pitch, irony etc. (Kvale 2009:199). In order to avoid losing too much social context from the interviews, I transcribed all interviews myself. This brought me closer to the material, eased the process of identifying similarities and differences between the participants and helped me naming key themes (Bryman 2012:486).

In addition, I have chosen to transcribe the material word by word and with registrations of emotions. As the study is on female leadership and thus a societal context, social dimension of the conversation is estimated to be of importance for the process of analysis. By including all parts and dimensions of the interviews, the researcher attempt to translate as much of the social interaction in the interviews into written forms (Kvale 2009:203).

Lastly, all eight interviews are in Faroese language and since translated into English language within the process of transcription. The reason for this was that it was more natural for the participants to express themselves in their native language.

3.7.2 Thematic Analysis

The purpose of sorting the material into themes is that this process enables the researcher to make sense of and interpret the collected data from the research. Briefly, a theme relates to the focus of a research and is a category, which a researcher identifies through data analysis (Bryman:2012).

Once having transcribed all interviews, this research implemented a thematic analysis in order to manage the large corpus of raw material and information. This stage is all about reducing the data in the interest of making sense of the collected data. A thematic analysis means examining the raw material into a selection of core themes. However, in order to identify the core themes, each interview is examined and codes are identified into groups. As result, the data is broken down into basic parts and given labels (Bryman 2012:13).

There are a number of criteria to take into consideration when identifying themes. However, in order to establish a pattern within a collection of data focus on significant repetitions is one of the most common criteria. However, just because the respondents mention some topics frequently does not make it a theme. Instead, it is essential for the researcher to hold the quality of reflecting over codes and gain sense of the cohesion and linkage between them. Moreover, any identified theme must be relevant for the focus of the research (Bryman 2012:580).

With the interest of organizing a thematic analysis, Ryan and Bernand suggest an implementation of a *Framework approach*. The idea of this approach is to arrange an index of central themes and subthemes in a matrix (Bryman 2012:579). This data analysis applies the *framework approach* and organizes coded groups into core themes and subthemes. This has resulted in three core themes with subthemes for each theme.

The following chapter, *Analysis*, is divided into three parts and each part will represent one of the core theme and related subthemes, which have merged from the data analysis. For the sake of overview, I introduce the three core themes at the opening of the analysis chapter.

4 Analysis

The purpose of the analysis is to explore whether Faroese women meet any barriers on their journey up the corporate ladder on the Faroese job market and additionally to unfold characteristics of possible barriers. Firstly, I would like to introduce my analysis by explaining the design of the chapter in order for the reader to understand the relationship between the design of the analysis, the design of the research and the research question.

Since this research is inductively inspired, the main purpose is to explore new theoretical and conceptual ground with basis in the perspectives of the respondents. However, as the field of study is unexplored it became important for the thesis also involve a brief theoretical framework. The way the themes are structured is relevant for this thesis and highlights the value of striking a balance between an inductive and deductive position. The thematic analysis has resulted in three core themes and related subthemes. The core themes have become the foundation for the construction of this analysis and are:

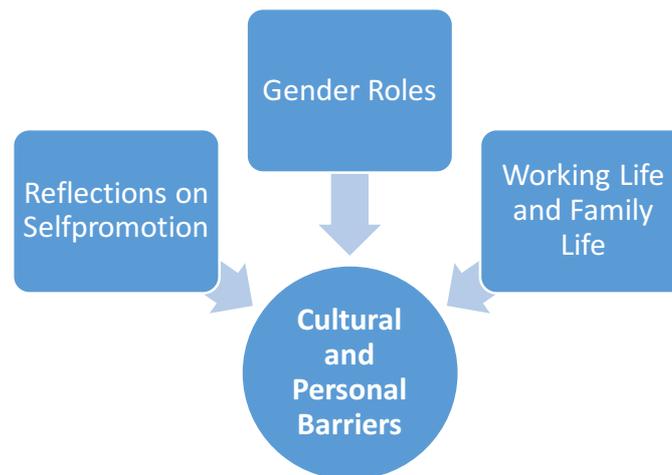
- **Core theme 1:** *Cultural and personal barriers*
- **Core theme 2:** *Faroese circumstances as barriers*
- **Core theme 3:** *Limited organizational barriers*

The themes are broad and consequently a number of subthemes for each theme is analysed throughout the analysis. Moreover, in order to gain deep insight into all perspectives, the analysis will occasionally apply statistics, theories and scientific studies in order to confirm or challenge new theoretical grounds. As result, the empirical data will be the foundation of the analysis and the added material will support or question emerged results.

Each theme will start out with a brief introduction to the core themes and subthemes. It is challenging to fully separate broad themes from one another. Moreover, drawing parallels between them can occasionally benefit the analysis. Therefore, readers of this analysis must bear in mind that some of the subthemes might overlap each other across core themes.

4.1 Part 1: Cultural and Personal Barriers

This first part of the analysis will outline barriers, highlighted in the theoretical framework and identified by the respondents in the empirical data. The main purpose of this theme is to unfold these barriers in a Faroese context and highlight the importance of involving a theoretical framework for this inductively inspired research.



The empirical data suggests a pattern, which confirms that Faroese women are experiencing a number of cultural and personal barriers, which scientific studies identify as barriers, that women frequently meet on their way up the corporate ladder. This theme will unfold these reflexions. In the interviews, a majority of the respondents highlight socialization, upbringing, gender-roles, communication and a longing for finding a balance between working life and family life as factors, which may bar Faroese women from top leadership positions. Moreover, some respondents point out how many women might simply not be interested in top management positions.

Part 4.1.1 and 4.1.2 share various perspectives and dimensions; however, the parts are separated into two parts in order to keep a clearer outline and avoid too long sections.

4.1.1 Reflections on Self-promotion

A number of the respondents bring out how the debate on female leadership and gender equality is starting to become less visible in the public debate. *“We might be tired of it – but have actually not progressed in this discussion, we haven’t got anywhere and actually, the discussion still has not been taken. It has not*

been given enough room or noticed in the society... but even before the discussion is opened up, it is degraded and closed down” (R3, l. 509-511). This statement does suggest that people are aware of the tendency but too apprehensive in bringing it to the table, as the subject will meet a degraded attitude. On the other hand, it might also suggest that people are aware of the tendency but simply starting to lose interest in it. Either way, the analysis of the empirical data of this research does suggest that there is foundation for debate on this matter – at least among women.

The perspectives of the respondents mainly highlight how it does not seem natural for Faroese women to put themselves forward to highly ranked positions on the job market. This perspective is to some degree supported by the fact that at least six of the eight respondents got their position in leadership offered and did not apply for it themselves. Some of them would not have applied for the position otherwise and argue that this is a general tendency among many Faroese women *“The challenge is for women to put themselves forward. As simple as that. To be available, present... and take the challenge upon themselves when it arises. In my case, I got the leadership positions offered... and that might just be very typical for women. Instead of putting myself forward and applying for the positions, nothing happened before I was offered the opportunity ... women need to put themselves forward and not be afraid to do so”* (R2, l. 268-272). Another respondent believes how the lack of self-promotion is something women learn from an early stage in childhood and demonstrates this with an example from her son’s classroom; *“I have two boys, one in primary school and the other one is in 2nd grade. Children in 2nd grade often have a subject field called ‘wonder-questions’ where pupils gets the option to stand up and share something with the class that they wonders about. This is a great idea to do with children and teaches them to question things, be curious and put themselves forwards... and speak in front of people. However, the girls in his class are too afraid to do this – and according to my son, this is a general thing among the girls in class. I do not understand why this is the case... what is it that has been founded in them? What are they afraid of?”* (R4, l. 725-731).

One explanation for this tendency among Faroese women comes down to the observations by Deborah Tannen mentioned in the theoretical framework of this thesis. According to Tannen, women in corporate life are less likely to engage in self-promoting behaviour due to habits, which girls learn in early childhood socialization. Tannen has observed how many girls are socialised to believe that putting yourself forward and being too confident will make you unpopular, as girls, who call attention to themselves within groups of girls will be excluded from their social group. In order to avoid this, girls learn to express themselves in ways, which meets their own needs as much as others’ needs. The drive for seeking high ranked positions requires confidence and self-promotion and if culture influences women to believe that self-promotion will result in exclusion from their social groups, they will not apply for high ranked positions

(Oakley 2000). Reflections from one respondent supports this argument in explaining how women often set this barrier for each other. She argues that when women do put themselves forward, for instance in seeking highly ranked jobs, their general qualities or qualities of motherhood are often questioned by other women. As if it bothers them if someone dares to stand out from the crowd and do some things different (R7).

On the contrary, one respondent introduces another perspective to this context: *“When asking myself the question, why are there so few female leaders in the Faroes? It might come down to, that they are genuine not interested. But I think that this might change among the younger generation”* (R2, l. 251-253). A majority of the respondents explain how it is by coincidence that they have ended up in their position in leadership. Most of the women were offered or upgraded for the position and most likely would not have applied for it otherwise. One respondents explains her situation: *“I have never thought that I wanted to become a leader. It has always been the given tasks, which have resulted in me ended up in leadership positions. Having an exciting and interesting job has always been the foundation for me ... it has been interest and tasks, which have been important to be and not any specific position”* (R2, l. 204-208). This experiences is shared by another respondent: *“I got this position offered. I am not sure that I would ever apply for it myself. But I am happy I was offered the position because I am very happy with it and have been very grateful for the opportunity ever since I started”* (R6, l. 870-872).

Applying these perspectives to a theoretical context, the theoretical framework introduces a study in which women were asked to rate their abilities for entering top positions. Even though 66% of the women believed they had the qualities for top positions, only 53% of them found themselves able to reach these (Jackson 2001). Moreover, the theoretical framework sets focus on how elements in upbringing can influence how competitively orientated women are, compared to men (Begley 2009). In relation to Faroese women, this might explain why they never themselves have applied for leadership positions but instead, by coincidence, ended up in them and still managed them well and were satisfied with the opportunity.

The respondents support this argument as many of them point out that women and men set different standards for themselves: *“women want to be able to cross of all areas of a job application while men are happy with just being able to cross of some of the things. So my experience is that we just need to get ourselves out there become as every task will make you more secure and experienced in time... and being a leaders does not mean that you have to be an expert in everything and being able to it all”* (R2, l. 273- 278).

On the other hand, the theoretical framework also introduces the explanation by Christensen how many women might just not be interested in top positions. Rather, they might have more focus on being mothers. This idea is supported by one respondent who expressed a concern about how little interest women seem to have for various topics related to the Faroese job marked. As example of this concern, she points out an event for women, which was arranged as part of the Faroese political election in September 2015. The event brought a number of topics to the table, among others, issues related to women and the job marked. *“the area, which ended up being in focus, was issues on social matters... not one question came up regarding employment of women in fertility age and most likely will take parental leave and be of the job marked in a couple of years... no women have comments on this issues for example. There were 700 women at the event! But subjects on children with handicaps for example is endlessly discussed”* (R3, 1. 492-501). This might question, whether many Faroese women are simply not interested in promoting themselves into highly ranked positions, as they are more focused on social topics and family matters.

A majority of the respondents did focus on the fact that very few women put themselves forward for top positions. Nevertheless, reflections on whether the low number of female top leaders is problematic or not, differ among the respondents. Some of the women see the low number as a big problem, while others do not find it problematic. Frequently, throughout the interviews, respondents referred to a specific newspaper interview with a Faroese female CEO. Therefore, before unfolding the different reflections on the number of female top leaders further, I will briefly introduce the mentioned newspaper interview.

In February 2016, a Faroese newspaper interviewed one of the few top leaders on the Faroese job marked, Jóhanna á Bergi (JB). She is head manager at the Faroese flight company Atlantic Airways and when entering this position last year, she became the first female head manager in a Nordic flight company ever. Prior to this position, JB has been in top management positions in a number of male-dominated Faroese work places.

In the interview, JB shares her thoughts on women and leadership and does not find that there is a lack of female leaders on the Faroese labour marked. *“We should not turn it into a problem that few women are putting themselves forward in terms of political and leadership positions. People should always do what they want to do. I do not see the current situation as a problem as long as no one is hindering us women from putting ourselves forward. ... Even though I do not see myself as a source of inspiration, I might have some responsibility. I would like to encourage young women to feel comfortable in their gender and do exactly what feels right to them – whether this means putting yourself forward or not”* (Sosialurin 2016:24). Moreover, JB stresses how she has always felt comfortable in her leadership positions. Since the co-operation has always worked well, she rarely thinks about the fact that she most of the time only

has male co-workers. In her view, it is never about gender but always about who is most qualified for solving a task.

One of eight respondents shares this argument and stresses how it is important to focus on qualifications and not gender. *"I think it is quite dangerous to say that there are not enough women because it always comes down to getting the best qualified women and it is not possible to cut that out in black and white... in saying that it has to be a man or a woman. It all depends on qualities and whoever is putting themselves forward"* (R6, l. 907-910). However, a majority of the women in my study wish to see more women in leadership positions and think that the current representation is problematic. In fact, four out the eight women mention the interview with JB and feel frustrated about her statement regarding how the low number of female leaders is not a problem. Moreover, they stress that if there were no barriers, then we would see more women in top positions. One of the respondents expresses the following *"According to JB, we do not have any challenges on this matter in the Faroes – and I don't get it! It is a very provoking statement to have because we are three women, which are CEO's in private companies in the Faroes – three women, so of course it is a problem! Therefore, when one of them comes with the statement saying that there is no problem, you start thinking that nothing matters, and there is no need for progress on this matter. Exactly this position in CEO provides a great opportunity to focus on the fact that women have not come as far and we want them to have come and that we have a long way to go"* (R3, l. 514-522). Another respondent explains her perspective on this matter in the following quote: *"It is a fact that the more women there are in management and leadership, the more female role models there will be – and this is absolute lacking and is no motivation for young Faroese women. So the current situation is a big problem"* (R7, l. 1017-1019).

Moreover, some respondents do not see the low number of female leaders as problematic as they believe that things are slowly starting to change. As an example of this, one respondent mentions two events (translated into "Business-day" and "Leaders-day"), which she is part of. During the last years, more and more women have started taking part in these types of events and in fact, at the last ones, there were just as many women as men (R1, l. 167-170). However, six out of eight women do not feel that there is much progress happening on this matter. One of the respondents has been in leadership positions for 14 years, and states that she is not seeing more women in leadership positions on the private market now than she did when she started. In her opinion, there are some women in leadership positions in the public sector but not in the private one (R2, l. 261-263).

Nevertheless, a majority of the women focus on the result from the last election in September 2015, where a great number of women were elected and which has resulted in that 11 out of the 33 members of

Parliament are now women (logting.fo; Nám 2016). A big part of the respondents believe that the increasing number of women on the political platform is a positive movement towards gender equality and getting women more visible in the society as a whole (R3). *”Well, things are changing as we get more women on the political platform and we see this giving result, there are more women in our government today and that is very positive and good! That also means that there are more women visible in the media and on television... so yes, there are thing happening and moving on the political area”* (R4, l. 760-764).

Furthermore, another respondent argues that this movement is a positive step in the process of breaking up the strong gender patterns as it becomes clear to women and young girls that political positions are just as suited for women as they are for men. *”When people see that women are in politics and can be part of governing the country then they will take this mentality and other contexts, such as the job field... and by time it will become natural to people. Bot for girls and for boys... Girls will learn to put themselves forward and boys – and girls - will see that women have just as much to say and men”* (R7, l. 1229-1232)

4.1.2 Gender Roles

As mentioned in the theoretical framework, many gender studies stress that *gender* is socially constructed and a result of social definitions. Billing believes that stereotypical beliefs set by society define what it means to be a man and what it means to be a woman (Billing 2005). A number of the respondents emphasize how the Faroe Islands are a very traditionally based and conservative society where gender roles are very clear. *”People are saying that we try to do a lot for women, and that is true. However, a big part comes down to gender roles. It is expected that the woman is at home with her children... expectations, expectations... all these expectations surrounds us and are inside us and need to be changed. This is done by getting more female role models out on the job field, which do other things and choose other directions. We can talk about this from now on and till the end of days but change will not happen before people and young people see with their own eyes that women can take on these leadership positions and be as active on the job field as men are. We are just afraid of changes”* (R7, l. 1201-1207). One respondent explains how she has had this debate on multiple occasions and is sure that an old pattern of gender roles keeps being very dominating in the Faroe Islands. Moreover, she claims that many Faroese women choose to live their lives through their husband and families: *“How can this be enough, just being happy because your husband is happy or successful? I do not understand it but many Faroese women feel this way. Consequently, the ambition comes down to the whole family and not ones’ own needs. Does this mean that women like me are selfish? No, why is it selfish for a woman to choose her carrier but not for a man to do so? For them is it an obligation while women are seen as selfish for choosing the carrier and*

not just being at home with their children". This subject of an old Faroese pattern of gender roles will be unfolded and discussed further in depth in part 2 of this analysis.

However, a general concern among the respondents is that there is a strong pattern of gender roles in the Faroe Islands. In the theoretical framework, Eliot argues that in upbringing classical gender roles are desired and thus results in different behaviour and brain in women and men (Begley 2009). A number of the respondents identify these factors and mention how girls from an early age are influenced by stereotyping on girls and boys: *"When I was in school for example, all books spoke to word that boys are the stronger and faster and should be pushed forward, while the girls are at home and knitting or being more passive... Boys are more physical while girls are quieter and should be clean and not too loud and so on. That's was the school material when I was a girl... so if the gender role, all the way through, are emphasized in that way – than the boys are in charge while the girl are the sweet and quiet ones – the this will automatically affects many girls self-esteem"* (R3, 1.600-605). Moreover, another respondent also reflects on this matter and points out how politicians always are referred to as 'he' or 'him' and never as 'they' (R3).

4.1.3 Family Life and Working Life

As identified in the theoretical framework, it appears to be a general barrier for women to find a balance between working life and family life. A result from analysing the empirical data is that also Faroese women face this conflict. *"In my opinion, the challenges do in fact come down to periods of life when you become a mother and need to balance family life and working life... personal challenges and not professional ones"* (R2, 1. 346-348). Many of the respondents identify this challenge: *"exactly in those years when women start having children is also the years when she can be flowering the most on the job marked. So women are often faced with the dilemma of parenthood and carrier at the same time"* (P1, 1. 84-87 & 90-92).

On a general term, the respondents argue that this conflict comes down to two things – learning to prioritize and not aspire to be a 'super mom'. Firstly, it is evident that the respondents focus on the importance of creating a balance between tasks and responsibility on the home front. *"Women who are too much involved at home will meet this challenge. I mean, if they need to take care of the children and all tasks at home full time... and meanwhile have a job in leadership. I think, what a leadership position demands is... in my experience... an equal division between tasks and responsibilities on the home front. It all comes down to how your private life is structured"* (R2, 1. 230-237). The theoretical framework briefly touches this personal barrier of the challenge of finding a balance between working life and family

life. As the respondents point out, the biggest challenge is to create a balance between tasks and responsibility on the home front. In the same way, the theoretical framework identifies this as a big challenge and points out that it is easier for men to have both a family and career than it is for women. This is due to the share in domestic duties and because there – in general terms - is an inequality in the hours, which women and men spend on household and domestic tasks (Wirth 2001:18). Moreover, Billing argues that because it is expected of women to have the main responsibility for family life and the household, it becomes difficult for women to manage high ranked jobs, as they often are time and resource demanding (2005).

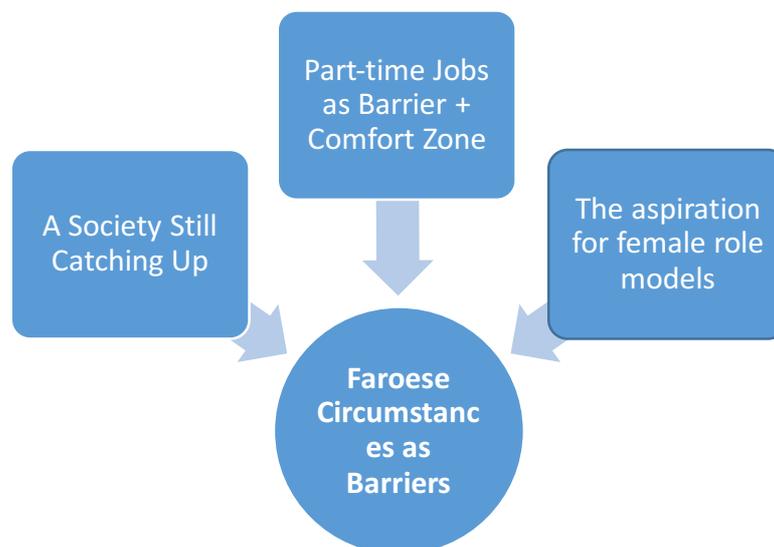
Secondly, the term ‘super-woman’ is in theory described as a drive, which many women have towards having it all and equally managing all positions in life (Linehan 1999). In the interviews, the respondents identify this term as being very visible among Faroese women. *”Because we live in such a small society and everyone knows things about everyone I think that in the Faroes there is so much focus on being a super-woman on all areas – you need to be good at everything”* (P1, l. 89-91). Some of the respondents argue that this conflict comes down to the fact that many women want to be at home with their children when they are small and at the same time wish for a carrier. *”I have 3 children and you want to be a good mother and everything that you once imagined but at the same it is important to have a job that you are happy with and is developing and exciting. I could just as well find myself another type of job and worked part-time – I have had those thoughts at times – but if I am not happy with my job, then I will not be the good mother that I want to be. It will reflect back on things around you if you are in a job that you are happy in. But I am sure that many women have this struggle”* (R6, l. 872-877). Another respondent shares this perspective and stresses how it is important for women to let go of the aspiration of managing it all and accept a middle ground *“In my view, it’s not one or the other. Just because you choose to focus on your carrier does not mean that you do not choose your children or family. On a personal level, when I am at work I get energy to deal with the challenges I have at home... such as with children, meals and so on... and the other way around. It balances out – if I were to simply be at home, I would have gone crazy. Because I would be missing the other part”* (R3, l. 549-552). In a theoretical context, Barnett argues that there are more positive effects than negative ones related to women, who work. Factors such as earning money, managing challenging tasks, receiving social confirmation and developing talents are examples of positive effects related to working women. As a result, the more roles a woman can manage, the happier she will be in various aspects of life (2004). A third respondent emphasises how it is all about finding an inner balance within yourself and believe that you are good enough in both areas – at home and at work (R6).

Nevertheless, some of the respondents argue that if women learn to give away part of the responsibility and let go of wanting to be able to manage it all, then this challenge will get easier in time as the younger

generation will enter the job market. “I think that in the generation coming after mine, men do just as much at home as women do and that’s important as you cannot be on all tasks and responsibilities all the time. Therefore it important to be able to give away parts of the roles and responsibilities to your partner” (R2, l. 240-242).

4.2 Part 2: Faroese Barriers

This second theme sets out to outline factors, which the respondents see as a barriers but which are *not* identified in theories and studies in general. This theme focuses on barriers, which have emerged as results of the inductive position taken in this research, and which might explain some tendencies, especially present in the Faroe Islands compared to other countries. This means that it is especially the contents in this part of the analysis, which underlines the value of taking a primarily inductive approach to my research field, as this process has facilitated insights into aspects of female leadership in the Faroe Islands, which might have gone unnoticed with a purely deductive approach to the interview process.



4.2.1 A Society Still Catching Up

An overall belief among the seven respondents is that the Faroese society in many ways is traditionally based and conservative in its way. One of the respondents expresses this perspective with the following statement: “We are isolated, not globalised, have a poor welfare system and are extremely religious and conservative. Congregations have great power and lastly, we have a quite traditional view on gender

roles. All of this result in that it becomes natural to people that the man is the breadwinner while the woman stays at home. That is what becomes natural to everyone” (R4, l. 744-747).

First, I would like to unfold the perspective of the Faroe Islands being a religious society. In this context, I want to introduce a study from 2010 conducted by the Icelandic Ministry of Culture. The survey is a Nordic Youth study and asked young boys and girls from eight Nordic countries⁸ a variety of different question on gender equality. Among the Faroese youth, 1254 people – 51.2% girls and 48.8% boys – in the age range 16-21 took part in the study (ICSRA, 12-14). In one question, the young Nordic participants were asked to rate how much confidence they had in the church.

Graph 8:

Table 8. How much confidence do you have in the following? - The church. By country.

	A great deal (%)	Quite a lot (%)	Not very much (%)	None at all (%)
Åland Islands	3.2	16.5	37.0	43.3
Denmark	4.3	20.0	40.9	34.9
Finland	7.9	30.3	37.0	24.9
Faroe Islands	25.0	39.9	23.2	11.9
Greenland	14.5	24.8	43.6	17.0
Iceland	15.2	44.2	22.6	18.0
Norway	11.4	32.3	29.0	27.3
Sweden	6.4	14.7	31.3	47.5
Total	10.8	29.0	31.0	29.2

The graph above points out that the Faroese youth differs from the other Nordic countries in this context. It appears that young Faroese people have higher confidence in the church than other Nordic youth has, as 25% of the Faroese participants answer that they have *a great deal* of confidence in the church and 39.9 % rate their confidence to be *quite a lot*. As these are statistics reflecting a part of the younger generation in the Faroese Islands, one could argue that Faroese families and the society as a whole are producing a higher set of religious values than other Nordic countries. However, it is important to be critical of this study as there can be a various factor influencing these results. In order to support this

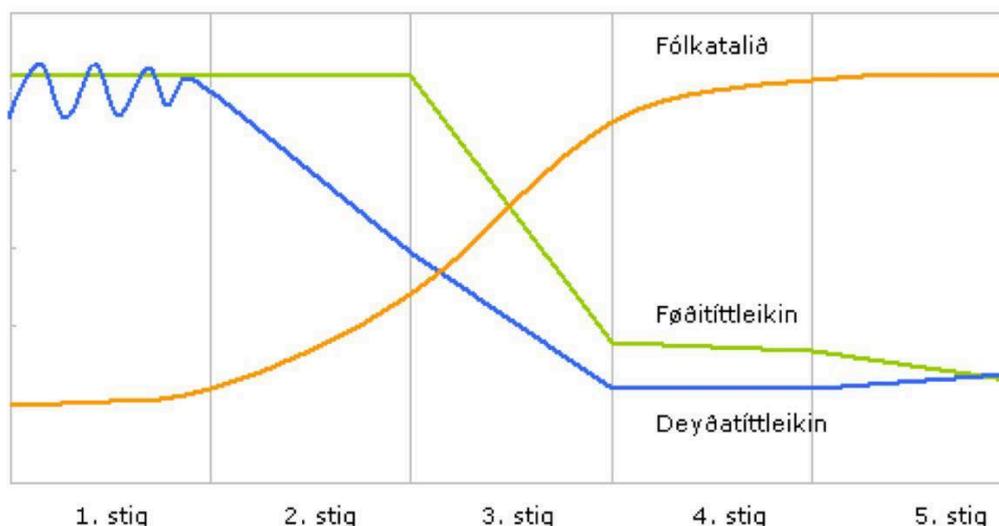
⁸ Iceland, Greenland, The Faroe Islands, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Åland Islands.

argument further, 81.6% of the Faroese population are church members and there are 14 different parishes in the Faroe Islands (FIIF 2015). Even though being a member of a church does not mean guaranteed religious activity, it appears from these statistics that religion plays a big role among the Faroese population.

Moreover, it also becomes evident throughout the analysis of the interviews that the Faroe Islands seems to be conservative and undeveloped compared to other Nordic societies. It is a general belief among the respondents that the Faroe Islands are stuck in traditional roles and one respondent explains this belief with the following argument: *"In so many ways, we are so many years behind other countries, to which we compare ourselves. For example - like Denmark, we also have a gender-divided job marked but to a more extreme extent"* (P7, l. 1022-1023). Unfolding these arguments, there are studies supporting that the Faroe Islands have been through a different type of demographic development and urbanization compared to the one other European countries have been through.

In the late 19th century, countries of Western Europe experienced a demographic development and moved from being a feudal society and into becoming an industrialised one. This resulted in revolutionary changes in societal, social, political and financial forms to the societies (Hagstova Føroya 2014:3). First of all, this development created five great periods of demographic changes. The following graph identifies the five stages, which countries have gone through.

Graph 9: The five stages of demographic development⁹



⁹ Hagstova Føroya 2015:3

Translation from Faroese til English: the orange line = *Population*, the green line = *Fertility rate*, the blue line: *Mortality rate*. Stig = stage (stage 1., stage 2, stage 3, stage 4 and stage 5.)

The fifth stage holds characteristics of the mortality rate being higher than the fertility rate. This means that the current population only increases or decreases because of migration. Most countries of Europe have entered this stage. However, it appears that the Faroe Islands have still not entered this fifth stage. In the Faroe Islands, the fertility rate is still higher than the mortality rate and additionally much higher than in other Nordic countries (Hagstova Føroya 2014:7; FIIF 2015:4). This means that the Faroe Islands, still in the 21st century, have a natural growth in population. One characteristic of the fourth stage is that women start entering the job market and become financially independent (Hagstova Føroya 2014:19). By this, one could argue that this explains the low number of leaders on the Faroese job market. The Faroese society is still at an earlier stage compared to other countries and as a result still characterized by old traditional patterns where women are slowly starting to enter the job market.

Due to a big outmigration of Faroese women, it is believed that the fertility rate will naturally decrease and the mortality rate will increase as the younger generation becomes smaller while the older population continues to be part of the population. This means that the Faroe Islands in some time will enter the fifth stage of the demographic development (Hagstova Føroya 2015:7). Thus, one could argue that it is only a matter of time before a natural change on the Faroese job market will take place.

The validity of this argument is supported by how the Faroe Islands entered stages of modernity and industrialisation relatively late compared to other countries. The shift from being a premodern society into becoming a postmodern one mainly took place as result of a modernisation in the fishery sector and an introduction to the welfare state (Gaini 2003). The Faroese welfare state was not introduced before the 1950s and at this stage it had been part of other societies for decades (Hagstova Føroya 2015:9). In other European countries, the urbanization took place in the early 20th century and the population started leaving the suburbs and moving into the bigger cities (Ibid). In Denmark, one quarter of the population lived in the cities and by 1921, more than half of the population lived in the cities – in the capital, the population increased by half a million in the years 1870-1914 (Den Store Danske). In the Faroe Islands, this movement did not take place before the 1950s. Prior to 1950s, the population in the capital, Tórshavn, was approximately 5.000. However, in the period 1950-2015 the population increased to approximately 18.000 (Hagstova Føroyar 2015:14).

A majority of the respondent stress how the Faroe Islands continuously appears to be traditional society compared to other countries and see this as a barrier. However, with the above mentioned difference in the demographic development and the fact that the Faroe Islands have entered stages of urbanization and modernity at a later stage than other countries, one could argue that this barrier will naturally disappear in time.

4.2.2 Part-time Work as Barrier

Throughout the interviews, the respondents bring out a number of explanations for the high number of Faroese women working part-time jobs. According to this perspective, which a majority of the respondents have, it appears to be more socially accepted for Faroese women to work part-time jobs than full-time jobs. *"If you are a real woman, a real wife and a real mother - and everyone wants to be that - then you prioritise your family. However, if you choose a job in leadership or management then you do not choose your family! The thought of combining the two is not that implemented in the Faroese society"* (P7, l. 1029-1032). Another respondent share this perspective. *"I do not believe that the men are pushing them into doing so. Rather we have a structure in the Faroes, which emphasises choices of women being at home with their children in the greater extent than motivating women to choose on a carrier. Socially, this is more accepted..."* (R3, l. 530-533). *"Nothing bad about being at home with your children but to some extend women equals mothers"* (R7, l. 1035-1041).

As it appears to be more socially accepted for women to be at home than choosing a carrier, some of the respondents feel that as a result it takes much more for a woman to put herself forward than it does for a man. One of the respondents argues if women do go out and do something different they will break up pattern. *"Repeatedly, you will need to give arguments for your choices 'what about the children? Are they safe in spite of you choosing your carrier?"* (R7, l. 1083 – 1084). Another respondent supports this perspective and explains how women are seen as selfish for choosing a carrier *"Women are seen as selfish for choosing the carrier and not just being at home with their children. Does this mean that women like me are selfish? No, why is it selfish for a woman to choose her carrier but not for a man to do so? This is most likely an old pattern of gender, which keeps on being dominating here in the Faroes"* (R3, l. 556-560).

Among the respondents, there is a general concern regarding the high number of Faroese women working part-time jobs and they see this tendency as a barrier for other women and the younger generation. *"All the people on the Faroese job marked equals a 100% and we are lacking near to 60% of full-time working women – imagine where we could have been at this stage if more women were giving themselves to the marked and working more! The society could have developed so much! Moreover, it is a fact that the companies, which have an equal divided number of women and men, are doing better because you get a more nuanced and perspective on things, which supports decisions and structure. This input from women is important because men and women are different they think differently... so the close to are to a gender balance the closer you are to good results. So I think it's very damaging for the society that so many women choose to work part-time jobs"* (R3, l. 536-543). Another respondent point out that once you start

working part-time, this will somehow place you on the sideline. In her own experience, she was during a short period working part-time in a job in Denmark. During this period, she noticed how she was given a different level of tasks than she was used to. As soon as she started working full-time again, this changed and she was given tasks of high priority (l. 147-150). Working part-time can affect your quality of work and opportunities in climbing up a corporate ladder. *“Often women start working part-time when starting a family and it is exactly during this period that men catch up with the women and overtake. At this point, work does not become first priority for the women, but it still is for the man (R1, l. 84-87).*

Moreover, the respondents stress that the high number of part-time jobs is a barrier to women themselves, and furthermore it is not an option to work part-time and temporary be qualified for high ranked jobs. *“I think that if women send out the signal to their workplace that they want to work half- or part-time, then they are temporarily sending a signal in saying that they don't wish for anything higher ranked. I have never work part-time, never” (R2, l. 256, 258).*

On a general basis, the women seem puzzled by this high number of female part-time workers. *“In my view, I do not care how men and women divide tasks and work-time. But when it gets to the point that half of all women are at home and many of them by choice, then it comes down to us - as society - reproducing a number of norms and social context, which is telling people that this is the right way to do things. And this is a part which I would like to see being broken down” (R4, l. 747-751).*

One might question why this old pattern appears to be this founded in the Faroese society. As unfolded in the previous section (4.4.1), the Faroe Islands have entered stages of modernity later than other European countries. However, the Faroese society shares other characteristics with other Nordic countries, such as a majority of women obtaining higher educations compared to men (FIIF 2015:22) as well as women becoming more visible on the political platform (logting.fo).

One respondent shares a perspective on this matter and introduces the term *long distance workers*. *“For years, we have had tradition for great flexibility where men – or typically men – work outside of the country or on sea and thereby are away from home for long periods at a time. This has characterized the Faroese society for almost 100 years. Therefore we have structures in societies which result in that women – no matter what – are responsible for everything at home... at therefore it is seen upon as a positive thing that the women is at home with her children” (P7, l. 1023-1029).* In literature, long distance works is a type of work, which has always been dominating in the Faroe Islands (Hovgaard 2015). The Faroese industry has always been bound to resources from sea and still today, 95% of the overall export depends on trades in fishery. As result, this main industry is on a general term considered as basis for the Faroese

economy (Knudsen 2009). Being a society with a tradition for fishery has meant that there has been a tradition for long distance workers as men have been away from their homes from months at the time to go out on sea. One could argue that consequently the women have had no choice than become the head of family and keep the family safe while the man was away.

As mentioned earlier, the period of industrialisation and urbanisation is different in the Faroese context compared to other countries. While the urbanisation in other countries meant that people moved away from suburbs and into the cities, in The Faroe Islands this meant that men moved out on the sea and then women consequently stayed at home and took care of the family. This movement may have resulted in a split between Faroese women and other Nordic women. While other women became part of the urbanisation and the individualistic movements, Faroese women remained at home and became head of the family. Still today, many men are long distance workers (Hovgaard 2015). Nevertheless, the respondents emphasize that many of the Faroese women working part-time jobs do this because they prefer to and not because they are obligated to. One might argue that it is founded in many women to stay at home rather than taking on a path of carrier. This might explain why the number of Faroese women working part-time is increasing compared to the numbers in other countries (Manntal 2011).

4.2.3 Reflections of the *Comfort Zone*

As a researcher, I wonder whether working part-time jobs has become a matter of *Comfort Zone* for a group of Faroese women. The following section will include reflections, which I as researcher have gained through the analysis of this research. These reflections are results of an overall impression from the empirical data and the primary aim of these reflections is to question some observations, which have become known in the research.

The special circumstances of a high number of men being long-distance workers has naturally created a tradition for women becoming the head of the nuclear family. This characterised a long period of time however, in the late 80s and early 90s, the Faroe Islands faced a financial depression (Gaini 2003). Big parts of the fishing industry went out of business, several companies and banks were bankrupt and rates in unemployment grew intensely. Furthermore, the depression had social consequences, as many families lost their homes and out-migrated (Jákupsstova 2005).

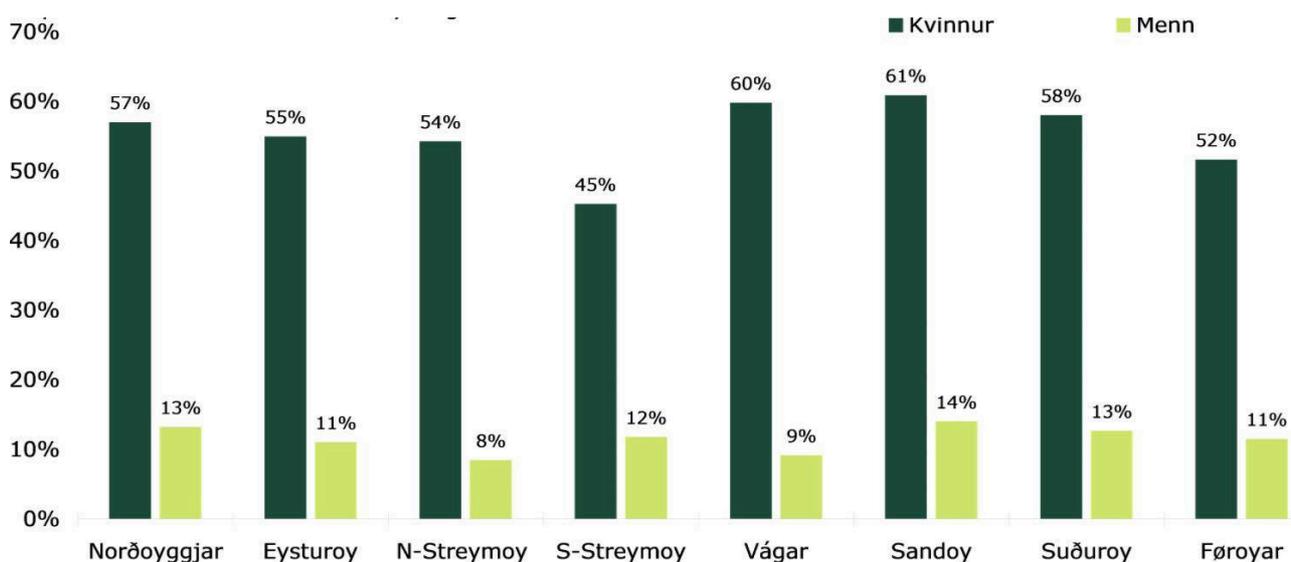
Originally, the Faroese Government had a collegial responsibility. However, one effect of the financial crisis became that the Faroe Islands shifted from a collegial responsibility and into a ministerial responsibility and a central administration. In July 1995, new laws and a new constitution were established and the central administration demanded new employment in several posts, which resulted in a boom of

new jobs and move towards the capital, Tórshavn. This consequently meant that many men replaced the work on sea with work on land and reunited with a daily life with their families (Sølvará 2002).

As a result, the women were now free to enter the job market as they liked and had options in developing a carrier. However, after decades with women being the head of the nuclear family and having full responsibility of the homes, one could argue that it is not easy to distance oneself from this position. Therefore, one might question whether women have found a middle way in order to get a bit of both worlds. In other words, by working part time jobs, women can remain being the head of the nuclear family and simultaneously be active on the job market. If this is the case then this position can be referred to as a *comfort zone*.

Moreover, there is a greater number of women in the suburbs working part-time jobs than in the capital, Tórshavn.

Graph 10: Part-time jobs divided into gender and area¹⁰



This might also indicate that women in the capital have are more modernized and not as attached to traditional values and traditions.

4.2.4 The Aspiration for Female Role Models

The general wish among the respondents is for this barrier of too many women working part-time jobs to be broken down. They see too many disadvantages with such a high number of women working part-time

¹⁰ Manntal 2011. Translation from Faroese into English: Dark Green = women, Light Green = men. S-Streymoy = the capital area.

jobs and therefore, naturally, not enabling themselves to enter high ranked jobs. Among the disadvantages are some of the personal barriers, mentioned in 4.1.3. However, most of all, the respondents stress how it all comes down to creating role models for the younger generation of women and men, girls and boys. Moreover, they emphasise that the more women there are in leadership and management, the more female role models there will be. *“If we had more visible women - and for each one we will get – it will get easier for the one coming afterwards. Because that way someone has already been there, created some sort of path, and shown people that it is possible. Of course, people in other Nordic countries meet the same challenges, but because we are so extremely... old fashioned... there are so few of us and therefore, each one who takes the step does stay out from the crowd. The more women putting themselves forward, the easier it will be for the next generation”* (R7, l. 1083 – 1088).

Some respondents point out how the pattern of many women working part-time jobs can be broken down if we break out of old habits and learn to see the positive things in female leaders. *“When a woman puts herself forward to a leadership position then we need to learn ourselves just to congratulate her and be excited for her and not start out with the thought ‘oh no, how is this going to play out, what about the children?’ – We need to focus on the positive and see it as obvious that a woman just as much as a man can be in a leadership positions while having a life and family. It works just fine for men – why should not it for women too?”* (R7, l. 1130-1134). According to another respondent, it is all about sending a signal out that women being in leadership positions is a positive thing and this is done by encouraging and supporting the women who do take the step and do something different (R3). Moreover, some respondents argue that we need to move as society and create more exciting jobs and options for women by adding diversity to the job field.

In general, the perspective from the respondents is that we need to change and that this will not happen before people and young people see with their own eyes that women can take part in these leadership positions and be as active on the job market as men are. One respondent explains her reflection with an example from Iceland: *“It goes under people’s skin and by time it become normal. It is like a case in Iceland. After having had a female prime minister in a number of years a man became prime minister – and kids came running to their parents being surprised over the fact that a man could be prime minister too. It all comes down to what people are used to and therefore we need to get women into leading positions and become role models for other women and girls to show them that this is normal and possible for everyone, not matter what gender you are”*.

4.3 Part 3: Limited Organizational Barriers

The purpose of this third and last theme is to highlight some factors, which the theoretical framework identifies as generally classified barriers for women, but which the respondents do not identify in the empirical data. The balance within an inductive and deductive approach to the research has enabled me to identify these. If this research had been purely inductive, I would not have been able to identify parts of a theoretical framework, which do not appear to be relevant among Faroese women. Consequently, the relevance of this last theme is to examine and discuss why these barriers do not exist among Faroese women.

The theoretical framework highlights organizational barriers related to the democratization of motherhood. Hovden argues that the focus on women and leadership positions might unconsciously remind people on the potentiality that women might be away from their top position from time to time due to pregnancy or parental leave and consequently result in discrimination. As a result, this can have a negative influence on a woman's career and women in top positions (Hovden 2011). The analysis of the empirical data collected for this study indicated that Faroese women do not meet these organizational barriers on their way up the corporate ladder. When asked if they are experiencing barriers related to the workplace, all the respondents, touching this subject, share the experience that they have never met any conflicts related to their gender in an organizational context and stress that their experiences in leadership positions have never been about gender. Three of the women explain how they have, while being pregnant or in a parental leave, been offered leadership positions: *"When I started in my first leadership position, I was actually on my parental leave and got offered the job meanwhile. So that demonstrates that I have always received the same treatment and had the same options and access as any other leader, in depended on any specific gender. In the former company I was in parental leaves twice and always returned afterwards and continued as leader"* (R2, l. 221-227) The two other women share a similar story: *"I started as department leader here in 2009 and was 31 years of age. After some time I got pregnant and took a part-time parental leave. Then, when the child was 3 months of age, I was offered the job as top manager here in the company"* (R3, l. 359-361) *"I started as HR-developer in 2008 and when the leader at that time left his job, I was offered his position. This was in January and started my parental leave in April. Therefore, I was offered the position even though they knew that I was going on a parental leave soon after. So that was quite interesting and positive that they did that"* (R6, l. 855-859).

Moreover, most of the women focus on that once you have entered a position in leadership, there is no focus on gender but rather on qualifications. *"I have never felt that my gender has been a challenge in any way. I never feel that I have not been chosen for any task due to my gender and I have never either got any special treatment because I am a woman... or having to work extra hard for this reason. It has*

been very much on same level as with other leaders” (R2, l. 221-224). Other respondents share this experience and do not feel that they have ever been set aside because of their gender. Apart from this, none of the respondents bring subjects of stereotyping in an organizational context or matters of leadership style to the table during the interviews.

Nevertheless, when the interviews focused on the subject of organizational barriers, the respondents emphasise how important it is to focus on all the opportunities, which female leaders on the Faroese job market are given. *”It is actually less frightening to enter the Faroese job market than it is to enter the Danish one for instance. I think that advantages are that one can easily and quickly get access to very interesting projects and get the opportunity of making a huge impact, while in other countries there is more competition around each job and therefore you cannot get access as easily. So in the Faroese it is easy to get access to very interesting and exciting jobs” (R6, l. 989-994).*

In conclusion, the respondents identify a number of cultural and personal barriers as being present among Faroese women who want to climb up the corporate ladder. Additionally, they point out a number of challenges related to historical and social factors in the Faroese society. On the other hand, the interviews do not bring up organizational barriers and the respondents stress how they have no experiences related to their gender in an organizational context. As researcher, I believe that there are two ways to understand this.

Firstly, these experiences somewhat indicate that Faroese men believe in the abilities and skills of Faroese women as leaders. Once again, I would like to bring out statistics from The Nordic Youth study (introduced in 4.2.1). One of the questions in the study shed light on gender and leadership. Among other questions, the young people were asked two questions - whether men are better leaders than women, and whether women are better leaders than men (ICSRA 2010:20).

Graph 11:

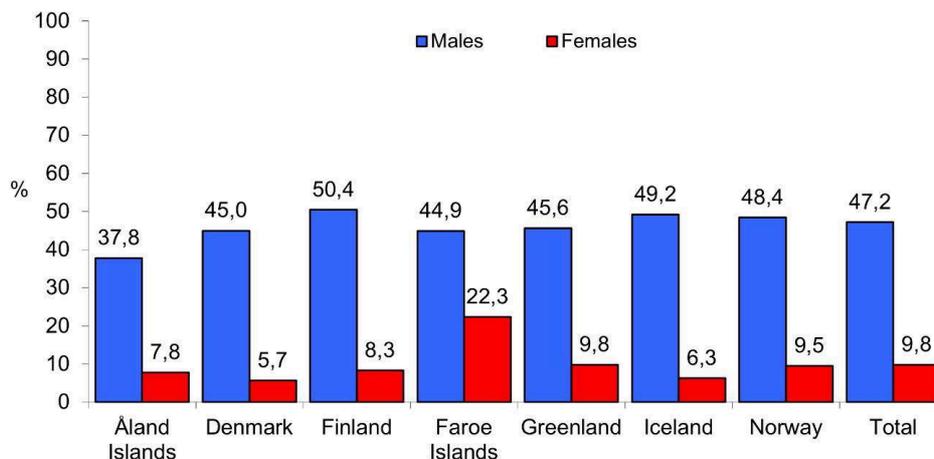


Figure 69. Men are better leaders than women - agree strongly / agree somewhat, by gender.²⁰

Graph 12:

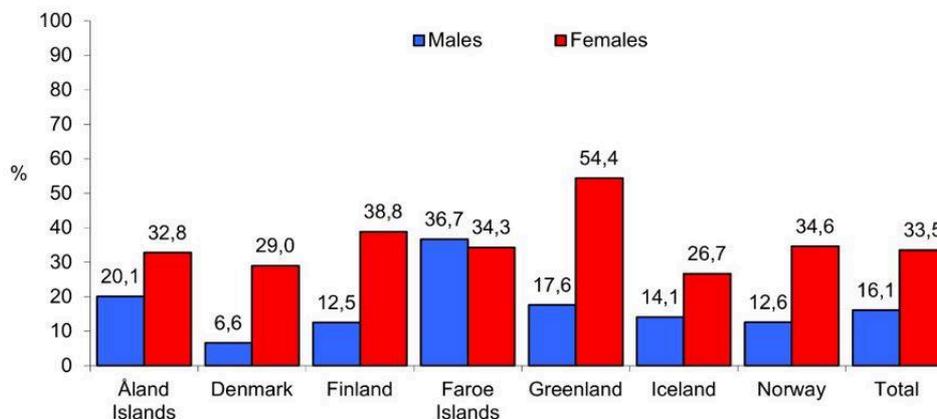


Figure 74. Women are better leaders than men- agree strongly / agree somewhat, by gender.²⁵

The results reveal that among the other Nordic youth, the Faroese youth differs. In all the Nordic countries, except from the Faroe Islands, the girls believe that women are better leaders than men are. However, among the Faroese participants, more boys than girls believe that women are the better leaders.

This statistic is interesting and one might questions the difference between the Faroese youth and the Nordic youth in general. According to the analysis of my research, great focus is on traditional values and a society, where there is little tradition for women and power. To some extend one might argue that this is somehow founded in Faroese women and brought on to the next generation of women. Faroese men,

on the other hand, might have left this old pattern of women and power once they left the sea and reunited with their families again. As the part 2 of the analysis brings out, a lack of female role models might result in that the old pattern of women and power keep being dominating in the minds and actions of Faroese women. As a result, men might encourage women to enter top position while women might not feel qualified for them until they someone provides with the option and they are able to experience the positive effects, which this position might give them.

A second alternative explanation is to see the limited organizational barriers experienced by the respondents in a different light. One might argue that the low number of female leaders means that the Faroese job market has yet to reach a level where organizational barriers might begin to exist and become topical. In other words, the Faroese society might still at a beginner stage in terms of women entering top leadership positions on the Faroese job market. The barriers, which the respondents identify, reflect this argument as the empirical evidence shows that Faroese women mainly identify barriers, which relate to cultural, societal and personal matters.

5 Further studies

Naturally, any study needs to limit itself to a specific focus as most studies of social science include endless possibilities of dimensions and perspectives. This research focuses on female leadership in a Faroese context and possible barriers for women to obtain leadership positions on the job market. Throughout the process of this research it has become clear how many other dimensions are attached to this area of focus. Thus, the process has introduced me to a number of interesting factors, which I believe would be of value and interest to add in a further study of this focus. I believe that if these dimensions were studied, one would obtain a clearer picture of the tendencies explored in this thesis.

I would like to use this section to introduce three ideas, which I believe would have been interesting to study further in relation to female leadership on the Faroese job market.

Firstly, an insight into what experiences and perspectives Faroese men have on women and leadership positions on the Faroese job market. If this target group was added to this study, this would create broad opportunities for a researcher to get insight into whether men and women on the Faroese job market have the same experiences and thoughts on the dimension brought up in this thesis. Moreover, this would enable the researcher to make comparisons between the genders and investigate whether there is a gap or whether men and women share the same perspectives.

Secondly, an interesting perspective to this focus on female leadership is the historical storyline on the urbanisation in the Faroe Islands. As mentioned in the analysis of this thesis, the urbanisation in the Faroese society took place later in comparison to other Nordic countries. A focus with insight and study into the historical perspective of the Faroese urbanisation might have value for the explanation of the set of barriers, which Faroese women today are experiencing in a labour context. Moreover, such a research could possibly become foundation for a further investigation of the suggested barrier *Comfort Zone*.

Lastly, the Faroe Islands are experiencing an increasing tendency of a pattern of women working part-time jobs. It is my belief that it would be of great value for this focus on female leadership to investigate why so many Faroese women are working part-time jobs. This research has touched upon suggestions for why so many women are working part-time jobs however, it would be interesting to target this group of part-time workers and investigate specific explanations for their choices or positions of working part-time.

6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis sets focus on female leadership in a Faroese context. A puzzling Faroese dimension inspires this focus and brings out areas where Faroese women differ from other Nordic women. This dimension includes a movement of a high employment rate among women, a high increasing number of women working part-time jobs and very few women in leadership positions. This thesis set out to investigate this dimension further and explore whether Faroese women are meeting any barriers on their way up the corporate ladder.

Overall, the research concludes that Faroese women are meeting a set of barriers on their way up the corporate ladder. These barriers are somewhat ingrown into the Faroese structure of society and produced by a traditionally based society. The research identifies barriers in cultural and personal forms related to upbringing, communication, gender roles and striking a balance between work life and family life. The theoretical framework support these barriers and point out that they do not differ from barriers, which women in general are experiencing on their way up the corporate ladder.

Moreover, the research introduces a number of barrier shaped by Faroese factors and which consequently are detaching Faroese women from other Nordic women. One of the barriers come down to the Faroese structure of society and the fact that the Faroe Islands can be classified as a traditional society. This thesis does however suggest that this barrier will naturally change in time and die out once the Faroese society hits an equal level of modernization as the other Nordic countries. By this, the thesis questions whether the fact that the Faroe Islands went through a period of industrialisation and urbanization at a later stage compared to other countries has resulted in that Faroese women simply haven't reached the point of being focused on climbing up the corporate ladder in the same extend that women in other countries have. By this, Faroese women might still be at a primary stage in terms of entering leadership positions. The barriers, which the respondents identify, reflects this belief as there yet is most focus on barriers, related to structure of society and not organizational barriers.

Secondly, this research questions whether the Faroe Island are rooming a large group of women, who shape a socially constructed barrier for other Faroese women - a barrier of *Comfort Zone*. As The Faroe Islands through history has been based on fishery and had a tradition of long distance-workers, Faroese women have naturally become the foundation of the nuclear family. Arguably, this has made them attached to their position as head of the nuclear family. In the modern society today, they might face a number of conflicts. Somehow, they are expected to enter the job market and might even want this. Temporary, this safe, well-known position as head of the family might be difficult to fully let go of.

Therefore, in order to avoid this conflict, one might question whether many women have found themselves a middle way, which gives them a bit of both worlds. By working part-time jobs, they are active on the labour market and at the same time they can spend enough time as head of the nuclear family. Consequently, they abandon the opportunity of reaching high ranked positions, as it is not optional to work part-time jobs and have a high ranked job or leadership position. However, the aspiration of getting a bit of both worlds appears to be stronger than getting to the top of their career. Nevertheless, they might be setting a barrier for other women and the younger generation. A high number of working part-time jobs does mean that women are becoming no more visible in leadership and other visible positions on the job market. As a result, young girls and women are not experiencing role models to show them that it is just as normal for a woman to be in a leadership position as it is for a man.

The research took on a position, which became a balance between an inductive and deductive approach. The aim became to collect empirical data, which essentially could give answers to the problem formulation and potentially explore new theoretical ground. In order to strengthen the validity of the research, a theoretical framework was included and this provided me with the option of identifying general factors and possible barriers. However, in order to give room for new concepts and theories to develop from the research, the inductive position became the dominating approach. This decision has resulted in a research, which has produced a vast amount of material, which I would not have accessed with simply one approach. The structure and results of the analysis reflect this argument as Part 1 is a result of my deductive approach, part 2 is a result of my inductive approach, while Part 3 is a result of both approaches.

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