Exploring gendered is parities in executive leadership Positions in Norway: a Qualitative Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Norway has gained global reputation for its gender equality efforts, yet a considerable gender disparity persists at the highest organizational ranks. This qualitative study explores the underlying reasons for the underrepresentation of women in executive leadership positions in Norway. Grounded in social role theory and the glass ceiling concept, the research involved a comprehensive literature review of academic journals, government reports, and industry publications. Thematic analysis revealed societal and cultural norms, organizational factors, and individual-level elements as key contributors to this inequality. Traditional gender roles, implicit biases, lack of mentorship and networks, gender culture, structural bias, as well as personal factors like confidence, self-esteem, and risk aversion emerged as significant barriers. The study critically evaluates existing measures aimed at bridging the gender gap, which have had limited long-term impact. Based on the findings, an integrated set of recommendations is proposed for policymakers, organizations, and individuals to increase women's representation in top executive roles. These include challenging traditions, fostering organizational inclusivity, providing individual support, strengthening accountability, and promoting collaborative efforts.

Key words: *Gender Disparities, Executive Leadership, Norway, Qualitative Analysis, Social Role Theory, Glass Ceiling, Gender Equality, Organizational Culture, Mentorship and Networks, Gender Stereotypes, Structural Bias, Women in Leadership, Work-Life Balance, Policy*

Recommendations, Thematic Analysis, Societal Norms, Gender Diversity, Inclusive Leadership, Career Development, Gender Justice.

1. INTRODUCTION

Though there is a real progress with respect to gender equality among the countries which are highly endorsed for their gender sensitivity to be seen in the persistent underrepresentation of women in executive leadership positions, across various sectors and industries, it still remains a challenging issue. Norway is known for its forward-thinking policies and values which are no different than the rest of the world. On the one hand, this country takes the second position in the world's gender quality hierarchy (based on The World Economic Forum 2022). However, the profound gap remains in the female presence in upper echelons of the corporate leadership (The World Economic Forum 2022). This paradox calls for the in depth exploration of the complex factors due to which this gender gap in executive positions persists in the business sphere of Norway.

Societal and Cultural Influences

Ethical system and cultural structure are among the norms where they not only form a person`s personality but also give ideas and expectations of how gender boundaries and leadership should be. As suggested by the social role theory, individuals, while they are being socialized, tend to internalize the ideas of society, which in turn may affect their behaviour and career options (Eagly 1987). Such socio- cultural norms frequently reinforce the stereotypes that leadership is for people who have masculine traits. This creates a gender bias and makes it difficult for the women to access executive roles in organizations and institutions (Heilman, 2001) The same can be achieved even more so by the traditional masculine existing cultures and values in organizations thus creating an inhospitable environment for the women which among other things (Acker 1990)

Organizational Barriers

And having broader consequences, cultural and structural factors could also contribute to the scarcity ofwomenexecutiveleaders.Eventhoughgender-basedwagegaps,absenceoffamilypoliciesandstep- peace promotion can challenge women and their professional growth in companies (Catalyst Report 2024), inadequate mentorship and career development programs that are adapted to women's unique problems can increase the obstacles they face to rise to a executive position (Ibarra, Carter, and Silva 2010)

Individual-Level Factors

Although the societal and organizational aspects have enormous influence on the high-level positions for women, the individual aspects are also key elements that contribute to their experiences and goals. Factorslikepower,influence,andrisktakingcan playadeterminingroleinwomen'sinteresttopursue leadershiproles whicharenormallyconsideredas amaleterritory(Ely,Stone,andAmmerman 2014). Women tend to accept the common gender stereotypes and self-limiting beliefs regarding their capabilities as leaders (Correll 2001). Besides, the career and family time balance difficulty together withsocietyexpectationscouldmakewomenmorerisk-aversetherebydiscouragingthemfromoffice leadership roles that demand high sacrifices. (McGinn and Castro 2021)

2. LITERATUREREVIEW

Women's under-representation in executive leadership roles is intricately intertwined with several multifacetedfactorswhichhavecaughttheeyesofresearchersacrossdisciplines.The purpose of the literature review is to summarize what we have in the existing body ofknowledge, describethegaps,andexplainthenecessityofthepresentstudy.

Significance and Rationale

The underrepresentation of women in executive leadership positions not only perpetuates gender inequalitybutalsodeprivesorganizationsandsocietyofthediverseperspectivesandtalentsthatwomen bringtoleadershiproles.Thepreviousresearchhasshowedwithoutdoubtthatgenderdiversityprovides organizationswithabetterperformanceandhigherefficiencyofthedecisionmakingandinnovations(Hunt, Layton, and Prince 2015). Through not maximizing the capability of women managers as such organizations and societies would be deprived of the advantages of different management.

Besides,suchmeasurecontributestotheimageofNorwayasapioneeramongthecountriesinthe   area ofgenderjusticeandstrivingforequalopportunitiesbetweenmenandwomen.Wetakepride in being the innovative and progressive nation. It is therefore very important to acknowledge and analyze the core problems that are creating the prevailing gender disparity in executive leadership positions in business setting in Norway.

The aim of this research is to obtain the integration of the social, organizational, and individual- level factors resulting in the lack of enough women in senior management positions in Norway's corporate situation.Wewillbeusingqualitativeresearchmethodologytoprovideanin-depthreviewofsecondary datasourcesandstrivetorevealthefactorsnetworkandtheinterrelations.Theresearchwoulddevelop into evidence-based suggestions and interventions which are directed towards a strengthened gender balance and inclusivity in the management and entrepreneurial roles throughout Norway.

Societal and Cultural influences

Various researches have demonstrated that there are societal and cultural norms that could limit women in advancing their careers. Eagly and karau (2002) emphasized the role of gender stereotypes in the formation of gender-specific dispositions in which women demonstrate more communal characteristicsandmen,moreagentictraits.Theveryideaofstereotypicalrolesprescribedtomenand womencanthwartwomen'sadvancementintoexecutiveandleadershiprolestraditionallyheldbymen (Rudman & Glick 2001)

Anotheraspectthathasbeenassessedistheongoingpresenceofconventionalgenderroles and the stereotypes about what women should do mainly at home (Benschop & Doorewaard 1998). The truth of the matter is that these social norms limit women from devoting the same time and energy as men into professional development, which has an impacting effect on their career growth (Eagly & Carli 2007).

Organizational barriers

The literature has examined extensively organizational factors that help explain the occurrence of female executive leadership deficit. One of the major impediments stated is the absence of mentorship as well as professional networks that are required for career development and better leadership (ibarra, 1993; Ely et al 2011).

Additionally, the gender culture embedded into organizational processes and practices has been studied. Moreover, organizational leadership, decision making and styles are strongly affected by masculine mores and values (Acker 1990; Britton 2000). This gender culture might give rise to an unwelcoming ambience for women in skillful roles.

Structural discrimination in organizations is another factor that has been cited in the glass ceiling effect. These include gender pay gaps, lack of family friendly policies, opaque marketing processes and so on.

Individual-level factors

Going along with those at the societal and organization levels, the individual aspects have also been theorized as the fundamental barriers to women pursuing their career progression. A range of determinants, including confidence, self-esteem and risk aversion have been identified among other impediments (Ibarra, ely et al 2011). Nevertheless, it should be highlighted that these factors are not fixed features but rather the results of the combination of the society- and organizational-level pressures. Through tackling the root causes and supplying customized assistance, companies could help women be a force they could be and allow for a more equal and equitable environment for their advancement.

Gaps and limitations

While the existing literature provides valuable insights into the factors contributing to the underrepresentation of women in executive leadership positions, several gaps and limitations can be identified:

1. Limited focus on the Norwegian context: though some studies have been looking at gender disparity in leadership within Norway, there is a necessity to have a more holistic and in-depth contextual understanding of the relevant cultural, organizational, and individual elements that influence the business environment in Norway.

2. Lack of integrated approaches: while many studies investigate the role of particular factors or levels of analysis, it is crucial that these are accompanied by research that takes a systemic and holistic perspective, recognizing the interplay among the societal, organizational, and individual-level indicators.

3. Limited evaluation of existing measures: while studies have focused on running gender equality campaigns and initiatives, there is necessity of a critical analysis of the efficacy of the measures presently enforced against this background in Norway.

The current analysis aims to provide a complete qualitative analysis of a number of multilevel determinants of the gender gap in the representation of women in executive roles in norway. Through incorporating societal, organizational, and individual-level perspectives, evaluating the interaction among those factors, and critically dissecting the existing measures, this research effort will provide an in-depth understanding of this endemic problem and recommend plausible solutions for the stakeholders at various levels.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study draws upon two complementary theoretical perspectives to shed light on the complex issue of the underrepresentation of women in executive leadership positions: each with its own particular theoretical views, such as social role theory and glass ceiling phenomenon. Social, economical, models and so on are the lenses that provide an all-round theoretical framework for understanding this gender gap which is so persistent.

Social Role Theory

Stereotyped social roles theory claims that society and gender roles have a key impact on self-becoming, intentions and aspirations, and perceived capabilities on the individual's path. Children experience society's norms and stereotypes from their early years which tells them what is acceptable and what is not which defines men's behavior and also the identities, as women. In socialization, culturally defined roles for males and females are stressed, giving shape to the continuation of stereotypical masculine and feminine persona. (Eagly & Karau 2002).

Social roletheorysuggeststhat theeffectsof socializationand genderrolesonthepersonality of apersonrange fromhis/herbehavioralpatternstoaspirationstobeliefsofwhattheycandowell.Fromtheminutetheyareborn toadolescence,individualsaresurroundedwithsocietalnormsandstereotypes,whichcategorizethegenderroles and socio-cultural expectations to assemblethem. Roledivisionalongthe lines of genders is perpetuated by the processes of socialization. It is through these processes that people learn and start performing gender-specific traits (Rudman & Glick 2001)

As socialrole theory indicates, womenare seen tobe engagedin predominantlycommunal attributes, including caring,sympathy,andcooperation,whereasmenaremostlyapplaudedforcompetitive,assertive, and ambitious behavior.Thosestereotypicalrolesfortwosexesmightbethereasonwhywomenhavehardtimeswhentryingto get promoted in the executive leadership positions, which are usuallymale-dominated areas. Women who are direct and show that no-nonsense leadership style, which is traditionally masculine, might be shunnedfortheirchallengeofthestereotypicalrolesandviolatingofthecommunity'sexpectations.Somepeople seethemastoooffensive,abusive,ordeficientofthecharacteristictraitswhicharecommonlythoughttobemore feminine.Bycontrast,awomanwhobringsamorecommunalandsharedstyleof leadershipmayalsobeperceived negativelyasdeficientineithercompetenceorstrengthtoleadeffectively.

The Glass Ceiling Phenomenon

Theceilingglassmetaphorindicatesaninvisibleyetruthlesswallthatkeepsdeservingpeoplewho are specially women back from occupying or getting challenged to taking up higher positions within organizations (Morrison et al 1987).. The causes usually receive so many different dimensions, like structural, cultural and individual factors, and combines with deeply-enrooted gender stereotypes that not let the women go beyond the path (Hymowitz & Schellhardt, 1986; Oakley, 2000).

Structural barriers are identified as the set of the employees' duties procedures and rules that help to maintain the status of women as secondary to men and also aggravate the women's career advance. These may comprise pay audits as well as reveal the paucity of the family-based policies that could supporttheWork-lifebalanceandmayalsosupposethesuspiciouslyconcealedpromotionprocessesin which the transparency and objectivity could notbe confirmed. Such structural barriers make the play fieldlesseven,raisetheissueofwomen'sbeing"inajungleofcatstonavigatethecorporateworldand subsequently hold executive leadership positions (Ely et al., 2011; Ibarra, 1993).

Employersisanotheroneoftheculturalaspectsthatworkasastumblingblockontheglassceiling. Itis actually a lot of companies in this world that manifest the so-called "masculine organizational norms"thataredeeplyrootedintheirprinciples,policies,andmanagement.This"genderculture" may seemsomethingthatcancreateanatmospherethatisnotatallwelcomingforwomenin theleadership positions sincetheymaywell faceresistance, marginalization orelseefforts to pulp theirownfeatures so as to transform into masculine features.

Additionally,individualpreferenceslikehowmuchawomanisassertive,risksshetakes,andproblems maintainingwork-lifebalancecanobstructherwaytothetop.Womencandevelopagenderstereotype and self-limiting behavior, as a result women exhibit an inadequate confidence in their abilities to position themselves in "the top" management roles that for a long time were mostly male-dominated. Additionally, dichotomous issues of work and family responsibilities together with social constraints canaddtotherisk-avoidanceeffortsthusmaybescarewomenawayfromleadershipencounterswhich may require giving up something or other.

The combination of social role theory and the ceiling of glass theory shapes the researchers hopes to presentanall-encompassingviewaboutthecomplicatedparametersthatunderliethelackofwomen in executive leadership roles. This is a theoretical framework that effectively captures the sophisticated bandwiththroughwhichsocio-culturalfactorsactatindividual,organizational,and societal levels by adopting a multi-dimensional approach to address this instance.

4. RESEARCHOBJECTIVES

Theprimary objectivesof thisstudyare:

IdentifyingKeyFactors

Touncoverthemostsignificantsocio-cultural,organizational,andindividual-levelfactorscontributing totheunderrepresentationofwomeninexecutiveleadershippositionswithinNorway'sbusinesssector.

EvaluatingFactorInterrelationships

To evaluate the interplay and relative impact of these factors on women's advancement into top corporate governance and leadership roles.

AssessingCurrentEfforts

To critically assess the effectiveness of existing efforts, policies, and measures aimed at bridging the gender gap in executive leadership positions in Norway.

3.4ProposingEvidence-Based Recommendations

To provide evidence-based recommendations that can guide policymakers, organizations, and individuals in improving the representation of women in executive roles across Norway.

The research objectives outlined above reflect a comprehensive approach to understanding the multidimensional nature of the gender disparity in executive leadership positions in Norway. By identifying the key factors at play, evaluating theirinterrelationships, assessing current initiatives, and proposingevidence-basedrecommendations,thisstudyaimstocontributetotheongoingdiscourseand efforts towards achieving greater gender equality in leadership roles within Norway's business landscape.

The identification of socio-cultural, organizational, and individual-level factors acknowledges the complexinterplayofsocietalnorms,workplacedynamics,andpersonalexperiencesthatshapewomen's

careertrajectories. Evaluatingtherelativeimpact and interconnectedness ofthesefactors is crucial for developing targeted and effective interventions.

Furthermore,thecriticalassessmentofexistingmeasuresandpolicieswillshedlightontheirstrengths,

limitations,andareasforimprovement,informingfuturestrategiesandinitiatives.

Ultimately, the proposed evidence-based recommendations will provide actionable insights for stakeholders at various levels, fostering a collaborative and holistic approach to addressing this persistent gender disparity.

ByaligningwithNorway'sreputationasagloballeaderingenderequality,thisstudyaimstocontribute to the ongoing efforts towards creating an inclusive and equitable environment for women to thrivein executive leadership roles, unlocking the full potential of diverse perspectives and talents within Norway's business landscape.

5.   METHODOLOGY

The investigation was conducted with a qualitative research methodology aiming at enhancing the awarenessoftherootcausesresponsibleforthelownumberofwomeninexecutiveleadershippositions in Norway. The approach used was the concept of extensive review and thematic analysis of the secondary data sources from publication of academic journals, government reports and industry publications.

DataCollection

The data collection process commenced with a comprehensive literature search across multiple databases, such as Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar. The search strategy utilized a combination of relevant keywords, including "gender equality,""women in leadership,""executive positions,""Norway,""glassceiling,"and"genderdisparities."Thisinitialsearchyielded asubstantial number of potential sources, which were further screened for relevance and quality.

Toensureacomprehensiveunderstandingoftheissue,theliteraturereviewencompassedadiverserange of sources, including:

- ❖ Scholarly journal publications particularly from popularly cited sources in gender studies, organizational behavior, and leadership.
- ❖ AmongothersourceswillbefeaturingNorwegiangovernmentreportsandpolicydocuments from the Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH) and the Ministry of Children and Family..
- ❖ Survey ofthe industry sources, journals, and journals from specialized organizations, think tanks, and leadership development.

Thesourceswerethoroughlyscreened,importantdatawasextracted,passedthroughcodingandsorted   into   thematic categories using NVivo software for qualitative analysis.

Thematic Analysis
The thematic analysis followed the six-phase approach proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), which involved:Thethematicanalysisfollowedthesix-phaseapproachproposedbyBraunandClarke(2006), which involved:

1. Byre-readingandmakingnotesarethewayoffamiliarizedata.

2. Code'sgenerationtocurvethehighrisksofcodingerrorbyastep-by-steplogicidentifyingand labelling segments of data.

3. Creationofthemesbypoolingcodesandcreatingpotential,eitherdominatingorrelevant themes.

4. Consideringthemaintopicsandeditingthemaccordinglysotheyhaveaclearstoryandtoavoid redundancy.

5. Themescapturingtheideasandprinciplesoncedealtwithinabstractwillbedefinedandnamed.

6. Alongsidethat,Iwilldevotesufficienttimeonthereportdevelopmentbydoingthemergeofthe analytical narratives and data extracts that will outline the conclusions.

Thethematicanalysisprocesswasprogressiveand   iterativeenablingustorefineandrearrangethemes asadditionalunderstandingsweremadeoutofthedata.Suchmethodofanalysisallowedfordiscovery   and   tracing   of repeated patterns, similarities and distinctions between the multiple sources and, therefore, a complex picture of the multi-dimensioned factors, causing the under- representation of women in executive leadership positions in Norway, emerged.

5. 3IntegrityandResearchAccuracy

To ensure the trustworthiness and rigor of the study, several strategies were employed: To ensure the trustworthiness and rigor of the study, several strategies were employed:

Triangulation:
A variety of information sources, such as peer-reviewed literature, government data, and industry publications, were used in a coupled manner so as to serve the purpose of verification and validation, and result in a more reliable and relevant investigation.

Peerdebriefing:
We carried out frequent communication with fellow specialists on the matters of women studies and organizationbehaviortoreceivenewpointsofview,evaluatethedata,andmodifytheinterpretation fromtimeto time.

Audittrail:

 Anaudittrailedofalltheresearchingprocesseswaskept,whichrecordedthedetailsofdatacollection procedures,encodingkeysaswellasanalyticalmemothatensurestransparencyandabletobeexamined by external related parties to the research process.

Reflexivity:

Criticalself-reflectionisthereforecontinuousforaresearcherinawaythatenableshim/hertogetridof   influences   of cognitive   myths,   preconceptions,   and   personal   beliefs   that   may   cause   distortion   in   data interpretation.Byadheringtothesestrategies,thestudyhopedtoestablishtrustworthiness,credibility, andtransferabilityofthefindingsandcontributetoadeeper
Understanding of the complex factors shaping the underrepresentation of women in executive leadershippositionsinNorway.Thequalitativeapproachforthisthesiswasanabridgedliterature review combined with a rigid thematic analysis. This allowed for a rich and nuanced understanding and description of contextualized factors, both on a societal, corporate and individual level that may affect the explanation of the enduring gender gap in top managerial positions in Norway. The current study therebyprovidesgroundforevidence-basedinterventionsandsuggestionsforincreasedgenderequality and diversity in executive leadership positions in the business sector in Norway.

6. FINDINGS

Thethought-provokingqualitativeanalysisofavailableliteratureexposedmetothesophisticatedcharacteristics ofsocial,organizational,andindividualdynamicswhichareastrongforce forwomentobe underrepresented in male dominated executive leadership positions in Norway.

Societal and Cultural Norms

The literature underscores to how much cultural and social norms affects women career progress pertaining to this. Norway is considered as a land where gender inequality does not exist at least to a certain extent; womenaswellastheirrolesinsocietyarestillsomewhataffectedbystereotypeswhich shapewomeneitherinworkplaceorsociety.ResearchbytheNorwegianSchoolofEconomicsrevealed thatNorwegianwomenfacedmoreproblemswithharmonizingoccupationalandfamilialduties,which rendedtheirpossibilitiesofprofessionaldevelopmentlower,whencomparedtomen(NSE,2021)'.The social norm that lays the unequal burden of household and caretaking works again women has been highlighted to constitute a tremendous gap for the womento pursuejob growth in the same manner as men due to the report of (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998).

Moreover,thesocializationprocessissodeepthatithasbecomeclearthat thetraditionalexpectations as well as implicit biases on leadership traits and management roles are still there. As the research conveys

that the stereotypical "masculine" traits espoused in leadership such as assertiveness and competitiveness, may be gender biased against and even unconsciously discriminated by women who are more communal and collaborative (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Schein, 2001).

OrganizationalFactors

Besides social forces, the element of the organization has also been a factor that makes women underrepresented in executive leadership positions. The literature highlights that one of the major barriers that is faced in this area is that thereis a lack of mentorships and professional networkswhich are key for one'sadvancement intheir professionand developingtheirleadership skills (Ibarra, 1993; Elyetal.,2011).Informalnetworkshavealwaystendedtobedominatedbymales,andwomentherefore facelimitstotheabilitytoaccessthem.Thisultimatelyservestorestrictmorewomenfromsuch networksandtospreadgender bias.

On the other hand, the evidence puts forward the existence of a "gender culture" within organizations, where masculine norms and values deeply penetrate into organizational practices, decision-making processesand leadership styles (Enloe, 1996; Biratti, 2018). Through this gender culture, a climate of incredibility is produced where it is rather challenging for women to be in executive positions and manage.

Structural obstacles in organizations like unequal pay for women and lack of services favorable to children, and unclear promotion processes, are the other important features that present women with a glass ceiling (Catalyst, 2020; CORE, 2019). These stereotypes can disfavor women advancing in their careers and become as well as deepen the belief that such leading positions in the company are the territory of men.

Individual-LevelFactors

Besides social and organisational factors, there are also personal contributors to the situation and, as it has been seen, women have desire for positions of chief executive officers. Among the constructs believed to hinder the women's career progress are self-confidence, self-esteem, and the level of acceptable risk (Ely et al. , 2011; Ibarra 1993).

Outsourcing can be perceived due to internalization of societal gender stereotypes and other career clueless beliefs that make women lack confidence as they can ass executive positions that are often occupied by male persons. Furthermore, the overall conflict of interest in terms of family care responsibilitiesandsocialculturalnorms,pull andpush factorsmayhavean implicationofraisingrisk averse personalities among female. Hence the competition between family obligations and social and organizational expectations hampers women to take up leadership positions where they might be required to make a lot of sacrifices or incur a higher level of risks.

The continuation of this qualitative research is manifested in the survey results and hence shows a weighted evidenceofthecausesforthecurrentdepletionofwomenintheEuropeannation'sexecutive compartment. These factors

include social and cultural norms, roles, and assumptions that may hinder actualchange,availableresourcesandstructureswithintheorganisation,andselfbeliefsandattitudes of individuals involved in implementation, which is why efforts aimed at translating evidence into practice should address all of these factors simultaneously.

7. DISCUSSION

The findings from this study provide a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted factors contributing to the underrepresentation of women in executive leadership positions in Norway. This discussion interprets and explains these findings in relation to the research objectives, theoretical framework, and existing literature. Additionally, it addresses the implications and significance of the findings and discusses the limitations of the study.

InterpretationofFindings

The primary objective of this study was to identify the key socio-cultural, organizational, and individual- level factors that contribute to the underrepresentation of women in executive leadership positions in Norway. The findings revealed that societal and cultural norms, organizational barriers, and individual- level factors are intricately intertwined, creating a complex web of challenges for women aspiring to executive roles.

SocietalandCulturalNorms

The study found that traditional gender roles and societal expectations regarding women's responsibilities significantly impact their career advancement. Despite Norway's reputation for gender equality, these norms persist and shape women's experiences in the workplace. The literature supports this finding, highlighting that societal norms place a disproportionate burden of domestic and caregiving responsibilities on women, limiting their ability to dedicate the same time and energy as men towards professional growth (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998).

Furthermore,deeplyingrainedgenderstereotypesandimplicitbiasesinfluenceperceptionsofleadershipqualities and suitability for executive roles. Stereotypically masculine traits, such as assertiveness and competitiveness, areoftenassociatedwitheffectiveleadership,creatinganunconsciousbiasagainstwomenwhomayexhibitmore communal or collaborative leadership styles (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Schein, 2001). These findings align with socialroletheory,whichpositsthatgendersocializationandstereotypingengravethemselves in identity and career building (Eagly, 1987).

OrganizationalBarriers

Theorganizationalaspectalsobehavesasamajoranalyzerthatcausesthegaptobeevenwiderforwomentoclimb this executive ladder. For many, the challenge of not being able to locate the equivalent of mentors and public networks was too big. Women frequently confront barriers in joining such inconspicuous networks as well they are primarily commonplace among males and contain biased stereotypes in most cases which do not give them opportunities to build helpful relationships and receive implicative information (Ibarra, 1993; Ely et al. , 2011).

It is not only the existence of a "gender-centric culture" within organizations that establishes patriarchal norms and values within organizational practices, ideals, and way of management, but also promotes the perpetual entrenchment of these masculine expectations (Acker, 1990; Britton, 2000).High structural prejudicesagainst femalesaremanifestedinsalarydisparities(Catalyst,2020),whichlacksfamily-friendlypoliciesaswellasvague promotion procedures (CORE, 2019), creating the glass ceiling effect. These results are in sync with the same conceptoftheglassceilingphenomenon,whichreferstohowinvisiblebarrierstypicallypreventcapablehuman beings, mostly women, from advancing up to higher levels within the corporate environment (Morrison et al. , 1987).

7. 1.3Personallevelfactors:

Theroleofindividuals incareer progression,intermsofconfidence,self-esteem,andriskperception, wasmapped out as well as barriers for women. Women have been found to ingest gender stereotypes that limit their careers and self-assurance by believing in themselves that they can be executive role models and perform above expectations(Elyetal.,2011;Ibarra,1993).Besides,awholelotofwomenstruggletomanagetheirworkforce

andhouseholdslitigationassociety'sexpectationphasesappearstomakeriskaverse,whichislikelyto demotivatethemfromgettingintoleadershiproles.

ImplicationsandSignificanceofFindings

The study's results have some very meaningful consequences, which will influence the policies makers, companiesandmen,whosedesireistoenhancethemisrepresentationofthewomenintheexecutivepositionin Norway.

7. 2. 1 PolicyImplications

Policy makers may give a consideration to strategies that enhance equitable work environments, while at the sametime,focusontheenhancementofpoliciesthatadvancewomenempowerment attheworkplace.Enacting those provisions is through, for example, applying existing gender equality legislation, pass of mandatory reportingprovisionsandperformancerewardstothoseorganizationswhichwillbeabletoshow their efforts and commitmenttoclosinggendergap.Moreoverly,thepolicieswhichpromoteswork-lifebalanceincludingparental leaves and flexi-work opportunities work as a socialising force in countering the undue load of domestic responsibilities on women.

7.2.2Organizational Implications

Organizations should strive to set in place a single environment that is inclusive and equitable. This can be accomplished through leadership training programs that address such patterns of prejudgement as unconscious biases and raise competence in a wide range of leadership styles. It is not something to be overlooked creating sales process redesign through transparency and fairness. Moreover, companies can make available tailored support to women, for example via mentorship and professional circles, and so to help her develop the competences to be eligible to the top positions.

7.2.3IndividualImplications

At individual level placing women in leadership positions is essential they should be taught how to build confidenceandself-esteemthroughmentorshipandleadershipdevelopmentprograms.Enslavingconsiderations otherthanthewoman,suchastheavoidanceofriskandbalancingbetweentheworkandhomelife,isstillof paramountimportance.Themainpurposeoftheprojectistoempowerwomenandconcurrentlyequipthemwith the necessary instruments and support, thus women can become more successful in their careers.

LimitationsoftheStudy

Theobtainedexplorativestudysupportsasubstantialfindingthatalongsideglobalization,theincreasingchange of technology act as a major barrier to women aspiring for executive position.

7.3.1.Thenarrowfocus ofspecifictoxins:

The multidimensional effect in which substance abuse encompassesnotonlythetoxicitytoindividuals'physical healthbutalsotheiremotionalstate,interpersonal relations, and overall well-being.

The research had the main focus put on the second-hand data and analysis sources, like academic journals, governmentreports,andindustry-orientedmaterials.However,thesesourcesdulyreportedtheoveralladvocacy of women in top positions, though one-on-one interviews or surveys of women in executive management could have advanced the study even further and added more insight.

7.3.2Insomeinstancesthecontext-specificfindingsinclude.

The present study gave exclusively Norwegian nationality's results that may not be convenient for specific countries or regions. Diverse aspects of culture, society, and organization differ from each other, which might bringaboutwomen'sunder-representationasdecision-makersinexecutiverolesindifferentcontexts. The future research needs to be carried out through the application of the comparative studies aimed at the investigation simultaneously the similarities and differences within the different settings.

7.3.3.PossibleBiases

Thisresearchisbasedonasecondarydatawhichcouldintroducebiasedinformationindeedasthesourcesselected andthemeaningsaredonefromonlywhattheresearcherperceives.Stepsweretakentoguarantee

thatacoherentandnonbiasedreviewoftheliteraturewasaccomplished,however,issueslikebiasinessinthe sources'
content are likely to remain and hence influence the findings.

FutureResearchDirections

Tobuildonthefindingsofthisstudy,futureresearchshouldconsiderthefollowingdirections:Tobuildonthe findings of this
study, future research should consider the following directions:

1. Primary Data Collection: Undertaking interviews or polls aimed at women leaders in the executive positions
may serve to awaken their experiences and barriers enriching the analytical scope of the causes of their
underrepresentation.
2. ComparativeStudies:Examiningthemarginalizationofwomeninseniorleadershiprolesindiversecountries
andregionscanhighlightcommonalitiesanddivergences,whichwillinturnexpandtheviewpointtothetopic.
3. Longitudinal Studies: Longitudinal studies have the power to measure changes, adjustments as well as
determine the efficacy of programs that define women's representation in leadership roles.
4. Intersectional Analysis: It is recommended to conduct future studies on an intersect approach, which
demonstrateshowbackgroundindicatorslikerace,ethnicityaswellassocioeconomicstatusjoingenderto have a bigger
influence on women's career advancement.
Thereby adequately emphasizing the significant challenges to be overcome, by addressing these research
directions,scholarscanmakeasignificantcontributiontothedevelopmentofamorecompleteandsophisticated
comprehension of the multifaceted factors determining the minimal representation of women in executive
leadershiproles.This,inturn,enablesthecreationofevidence-basedpoliciesinterventionspromotingthegender
equalityintheworkplace.Intheend,thisresearchemphasizesthemultifacetedcharacterofthefactorsimpairing
theattendanceoffemaleleadersinthetopofficesofNorway'sexecutivesphere.Developingawarenessofsociety   and
culture as a business barrier, a strategy of overcoming the opponents, and a multilevel system through the
comprehensiveandintegratedwaywillhelpuscreateamoresupportivespaceforwomentomoveupto the executivelevels.

8. CONCLUSION

This qualitative study, have been informed by a detailed narrative of multilayered aspects that have a negative
effectonthenumberofwomenintoppositionincompanyinNorway.Whileprobablytheworld'smodelcountry
intermsofthestatusofwomen,theresearchconclusivelyshowsthattheinfluenceistwo-folddeservingofmore   thorough
analysis.

The analysisbrought tothelight theexistence ofthe age-varying social andcultural normsthat aren't favorable to
women's career progress. Traditional gender roles and stereotypes of women's duty in workplace which are still
the reality of today are the core reasons for both their actions and attitude in the company. The always at
homeandcaregivingdutiesthatputwomenarehandswhentheyareonlyleftwiththemalsolimitstheirtimeto
devotethesameenergyasmentowardstheirgrowthatwork   (EaglyandCarli2007;BenschopandDoorewaard   1998).
Moreover, gender stereotypes and subtle biases held unconsciously in people's heads determine competence and
leadership qualities. For instance, the more accommodative and communal leadership styles typically found in
women are biased against (Eagly and Karau 2002; Schein 2001)

With regard to mentorship and professional partnership, it turned out to be the critical issue of organizational
levelforthe womenontheirwaytoachievingthetopexecutiveposition.Itisthese unofficial networks that are often
patriarchal and may serve to keep women from forming friendships and gaining insights that are vital for
theirprofessionalgrowth(Ibarra1993;Elyetal.2011).Asforgenderculturewhicharemasculine-biasednorms,
values,andpracticesestablishedinvariousorganizationsmightcreateuncomfortableenvironmentforwomenin
leadershippositions(Acker1990;Britton2000).Structuralbiaswhichincludespaygapsbasedongender,lackof family-
friendly policy and ambiguous promotion processes also exacerbate the glass ceiling phenomenon. Psychologists
found that women who spoke confidently and forcefully were perceived as difficult and unprofessional.

At an individual level, lack of confidence, self-esteem, and fraud-risk-aversion were recognized as necessary
resistances for women's career promotion. Men and women could unconsciously practice the social gender
stereotypes and career limiting believes which therefore negatively affect the confidence of the women in their
capabilities to take up the executive roles that were initially reserved for men by birth (Ely, Ibarra, and Kolb

2011;Ibarra1993).Inadditiontoearlysocialization,expectations,andthestrugglesofbalancingworkandfamily responsibilities, a heightened sense of risk aversion may be fostered that stems from bigsacrificesortrade-offs regarding leadership may paradoxically prevent women from pursuing top leadership positions.

The outcomes of this research is going to have a serious consequence for policymakers, organizations and the individuals that are involved in /trying to fight the imbalanced male and female representation in the upper managementtiersoftheNorwegiancorporateleadership.Thepolicymakershavetoreviewtheavailablegender   equality legislation or introduce further legislation, which requires obligatory reporting, and organizations are sponsored according to the progress they have already made in closing the gender gap. Besides, those policies thatpermitwork-lifebalancelikeparentalleavesandflexibleworkschedulescaneasetheweightofftheshoulder of women who take the bulk of household duties.

The first step that should be taken in such a program is to develop training approaches for leaders who address biases without regard to skin color or gender while promoting diverse styles of leadership. Developing and implementingrevisedselectionandprogressionmethodstomakethemtransparentandsafeisanotherimportant step.Moreover,tothisend,itisnecessarythatbusinessentitiesprovidecareerdevelopmenttoolsforfemales(e. g.mentorship,andnetworking)toenablethemnavigatesuccessfullytheir way to executive positions.

At the individual level, women should be encouraged to build confidence and self-esteem through leadership developmentprogramsandmentorshipinitiatives.Addressingpersonalfactorsthatmaydiscouragewomenfrom pursuingexecutiveleadershiproles,suchasriskaversionandwork-lifebalancechallenges,isalsoessential.By empoweringwomenandprovidingthemwiththenecessarytoolsandsupport,theycanovercomethebarriersto   career advancement.

AddressingtheunderrepresentationofwomeninexecutiveleadershippositionsinNorwayrequiresaholisticand integrated approach that acknowledges the interplay between societal, organizational, and individual-level factors. By challenging traditional gender roles, fostering organizational inclusivity, providing individual-level support, strengthening accountability measures, and promoting collaborative efforts among stakeholders,Norway can further solidify its reputation as a global leader in gender equality and unlock the full potential of diverse perspectives and talents in executive leadership positions.

While this study provides valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. The reliance on secondary data sources may introduce potential biases, and the findings are specific to the Norwegian context, limitingtheirgeneralizabilitytoothercountriesorregions.Futureresearchshouldconsiderprimarydatacollection   through interviews or surveys with women in executive leadership positions, as well as comparative studies across different cultural and organizational contexts.

Ultimately, this study serves as a call to action for stakeholders at all levels to address the complex and deeply rootedfactorscontributingtotheunderrepresentationofwomeninexecutiveleadershippositionsin   Norway.By implementingevidence-basedinterventionsandfosteringacollaborativeandinclusiveenvironment,Norwaycan continuetoleadthewayinpromotinggenderequalityandharnessingthefull potential ofitsdiverseworkforce.

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