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Moving up the ladder: a mixed-method case study of barriers to gender diversity in leadership pipelines

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Abstract

The underrepresentation of women in management has been extensively studied over the years. Although research proves the many benefits of gender-diverse teams, and many initiatives have been introduced to promote them, this still remains an issue today. This paper was conducted as a case study, allowing the authors to explore an unique setting within an multinational organization, exploring and identifying the issues prevalent today. Thus, this case study aims to investigate how gender biases affect gender diversity in the leadership pipeline in a specific organization. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, it combines secondary data, a survey, and semi-structured interviews to explore and identify potential barriers that women have in attaining senior management positions.

The research findings highlight numerous gender biases that negatively impact gender diversity in the leadership pipeline. These biases include but are not limited to lack of mentorship, stereotypes about women's leadership capabilities and unconscious biases during performance evaluations and promotion processes. The study also identifies several differences in the career profiles amongst the employees, providing an advantage to the male managers in an traditional hierarchical setting. The study highlights the need for organizational support and awareness regarding biases, so that the career development within the organization can foster a strong and more diverse leadership pipeline.

This case study approach offers a glimpse into the complexities regarding the potential barriers women have when attaining senior management positions. The findings contribute to the existing literature on gender diversity in senior management positions, offering valuable insights for organizations seeking to address the gender imbalance and foster more diverse and inclusive workplaces.

Keywords: Gender diversity, leadership pipeline, talent management, self-career management, gender biases, career development, career concept model, diversity management

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1. Introduction

Gender diversity in leadership is a topic that has been an ongoing discussion and concern in the field of management for years (Terjesen & Singh, 2008). In the increasingly globalized and interconnected business environment we face today, fostering gender diversity in top management positions is not only a matter of social justice but also a crucial factor contributing to organizational success (World Economic Forum, 2016). Despite the widespread recognition of the benefits of gender diversity for improved financial performance (Carter, Simkins & Simpson, 2003; Noland, Moran & Kotschwar, 2016; Hunt, Layton & Prince, 2015), enhanced innovation and creativity (Hewlett, Marshall & Sherbin, 2013), better decision-making (Rock & Grant, 2016) and for positive impact on company reputation (Brammer, Millington & Rayton, 2007), the underrepresentation of women in higher leadership positions remains an issue (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Ellemers, 2018; McKinsey, 2022; Ely & Thomas, 2020). There is a constant lack of women in leadership positions, with women representing just 27% of all manager positions around the world, and the current estimate is that it will take more than 100 years to achieve gender equality, based on the current rate of progress (World Economic Forum, 2021).

As a result, organizations have implemented various diversity initiatives aimed at fostering gender equality and ensuring equal representation of women in leadership positions, including mentorship and sponsorship programs, leadership development programs, flexible work arrangements and networking opportunities and inclusive recruitment practices (Ibarra, Carter, & Silva, 2010; Hewlett & Luce, 2005; Bielby, 2000). However, despite these efforts, the paradox of the underrepresentation of women in leadership pipelines persists.

1.1 Problem Formulation

Despite the many advantages of gender diversity and various efforts and initiatives to promote equal representation, women continue to be underrepresented in top management positions. Across all industries, women currently make up on average 33% of junior level staff, 24% of mid-level staff, 15% of senior level staff, and 9% of CEOs. Although having invested in women as they enter in junior positions, employers appear to frequently lose their investment by failing to retain talent up the ladder (World Economic Forum, 2016). This is

related to the concept of leadership pipeline, which refers to the strategic and systematic approach of identifying, developing, and preparing high-potential employees for advancing to higher levels of leadership roles within an organization (Charan, Drotter, & Noel, 2001). So how come that even with the significant amount of research showing the benefits of diversity in senior management positions, and the many initiatives for gender diversity, why are these numbers so low and this progress so slow?

Research has revealed certain barriers that women often face when trying to advance to higher managerial positions, and these barriers are more pronounced in certain traditionally male-dominated fields (Eagly & Carli, 2007). These barriers can be described as gender biases, which is bias directly affecting women because of their gender (Oakley, 2000). Other barriers can include gender stereotypes, lack of representation in leadership, work-life balance issues, and the impact of the glass ceiling (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Gender stereotypes can influence the perception of women's abilities and suitability for leadership roles, leading to biases in recruitment, evaluation, and promotion processes (Heilman, 2001). The underrepresentation of women in leadership positions can further reinforce these stereotypes and hinder access to networks, mentorship, and sponsorship opportunities, for women, that are crucial for career advancement (Ibarra et al., 2010). These stereotypes can lead to a phenomenon known as the "think manager, think male" bias (Schein, 2001), where individuals tend to associate leadership traits with men. Consequently, women are often evaluated more harshly and held to higher standards than their male counterparts (Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs & Tamkins, 2004).

The time and money organizations spend on gender diversity initiatives costs can be substantial, including expenses related to training programs, diversity recruitment efforts, and the implementation of flexible work policies (Hoobler, Lemmon, & Wayne, 2011). Despite these investments, there is limited success of such initiatives (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016), which underscores the need for organizations to address the root causes of gender inequality and create a more inclusive and supportive environment for all employees. Gender diversity initiatives often fail due to a variety of factors, such as organizational culture, unconscious biases, and work-life balance issues (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Ibarra et al., 2010). Additionally, some women may have different career preferences or opt for alternative career paths due to the challenges they face in accessing senior management positions (Ellemers, Rink, Derks, & Ryan, 2012). To conclude, numerous organizations are dedicating and spending resources and

effort to enhance gender diversity, particularly in upper-level management roles (Prime & Salib, 2014). However, several questions arise: Are these initiatives falling short in achieving their goal of promoting gender diversity? Is the commitment to diversity insufficient in organizations? Could it be that women, in general, show less interest in pursuing these senior positions? Or is it that the men are hindering women, wanting to keep their majority? Is there a possibility that men genuinely fit better in their roles, outperforming women as managers and leaders? These thought-provoking questions demand additional research to promote a fairer, more inclusive, and diverse workplace.

Currently, the gap in the research regarding these topics is the lack of focus on specific industries and companies. Certain companies may have unique barriers and challenges that need to be addressed. Therefore, to address these problems and this specific gap in the research, this study will be conducted as a qualitative case study of a global engineering organization, aiming to explore and provide a tangible example of the barriers women encounter within the leadership pipeline. This consequently leads to a significant lack of gender diversity within management positions in organizations.

1.2 The Organization

The organization we are collaborating with in this study was founded in Sweden. The headquarters are still located in Sweden, but they are also operating in several different countries globally. In collaboration with this organization, we have carried out our thesis work, acquiring data and insights, as well as conducting a survey and interviews. The secondary data gathered, and our relationship with the organization will be elaborated upon in chapter 3.2.1 Relationship with the organization, and 3.3.2 Secondary data.

The organization has more than 5,000 employees worldwide, with nearly half of them being white-collar workers, which will be the primary focus of our study. The organization is segmented into a number of distinct business units (BU). There is a significant emphasis on career development in the organization, as evidenced by various programs such as the Local Leadership Program, International Management Program, an Academy, and Talent Programs. Moreover, the organization actively pursues numerous diversity initiatives, including local efforts, training sessions, promoting female influencers, nomination programs, establishing

role models, celebrating International Women's Day, encouraging networking, and a mentorship program.

Furthermore, the organization has expressed that they consider the diversity issues in their leadership pipeline to be in regards to the “older employees” on the “higher levels” in the hierarchy (From interview with HR representatives, 28-02-2023). The hierarchy in the organization is divided into different levels, where the CEO is on level 1, the Vice Presidents is level 2 and the management team is level 3.

However, despite the many efforts and initiatives mentioned, women only make up around 20% of leadership positions across all levels within this organization. Figure 1:1 below shows the gender distribution in the leadership pipeline per level, included is also the gender distribution for individual contributors, in other words, all employees that are not managers in the organization. In the highest two levels, there are only men and on level 3 there are only 10 % women.

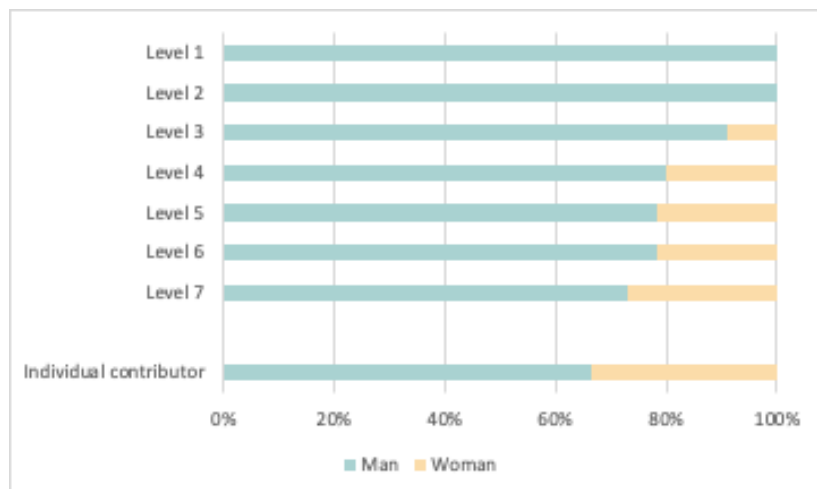


Figure 1:1: Gender diversity distribution per level in the leadership pipeline

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate how gender biases might be the cause of the lack of gender diversity in the leadership pipeline in a specific organization. This will be done by exploring the perceived potential barriers that employees encounter in attaining senior management positions, which subsequently hinder gender diversity in top management. The barriers will be examined from an organizational and individual perspective.

Insights gained from understanding these gender barriers will contribute to raising awareness about their existence, as well as providing information on strategies to mitigate and manage them. Furthermore, the research will contribute to making the organization and the readers aware of the gender biases that exist, and how it affects the leadership pipeline.

Doing a case study gives us a unique opportunity to explore the context and practical challenges of this organization, and identify the specific barriers residing within the specific organization. This information will bring value to us, and future researchers, since the barriers identified will be applicable to similar organizations and similar contexts. Furthermore, it will bring value to organizations attempting to increase their diversity, and to women who are trying to advance their careers in a bias-filled hierarchical career ladder.

1.4 Research Questions

In accordance with our purpose we have formulated three main research questions, as presented below:

- **Research Question 1:** How does gender biases affect the lack of gender diversity in the leadership pipeline?
- **Research Question 2:** What, if any, are the perceived barriers that employees encounter when attaining senior management positions and what role does these potential barriers have in explaining the lack of gender diversity in the leadership pipeline?
- **Research Question 3:** How does individual and organizational factors counter the lack of gender diversity in the leadership pipeline?

To further explore our research questions we have constructed a number of hypotheses that will be tested in response to them. Further presentation and elaboration of these hypotheses will be included in the following chapter 2. Theoretical Framework, in conjunction with our analytical framework.

1.5 Demarcations

Firstly, considering the lack of time and resources, we have had to make some demarcations of our study, which we will present here. As previously stated, this study was conducted within a specific organization located in Sweden, which consequently makes it more challenging to generalize the results to the broader population. However, many organizations experience similar challenges presented above, and therefore we consider that our conclusions might result in gaining further insights and understanding of these issues, even for other organizations. The choice of studying a specific organization was also made on the grounds that we will have an opportunity to analyze on a deeper and more complex level, which can be beneficial considering that the subject is complicated and multifaceted.

Secondly, another demarcation that we have done is focusing on vertical advancement, in other words moving up in the hierarchy, and not including horizontal advancement. This decision is driven by the fact that the problem in the organization is clearly concerning the lack of vertical advancement for women.

Lastly, due to time constraints and after consultation with our collaborating organization, the decision was made to focus exclusively on gender diversity in relation to the leadership pipeline since they expressed experiencing challenges with this. Therefore, another demarcation is that we are not including an intersectional perspective, although much research shows that women of color have an even harder time gaining leadership positions as they face both gender and race barriers (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). However, this decision also gave us the opportunity to dive deeper into this specific aspect.

1.6 Outline

In Chapter 2 we will present the theoretical framework divided in four main chapters as well as our conceptual and analytical framework, based on the problem formulation and our theories and hypotheses.

Chapter 3 will focus on the methodology, where we will present our research approach, research design, data collection, and sampling as well as a critical reflection on the quality of the methods and of the overall study.

Chapter 4 will present our results and analysis of the data, divided into secondary data, results from the survey data, and finally the results from the interviews.

In chapter 5 we will present the discussion, in accordance with our analytical framework. We also present the results from our hypothesis.

Lastly, in chapter 6 we will discuss our research questions as well as present a conclusion, including main findings, contributions, practical implications and suggestions for future research on this subject.

2. Theoretical Framework

This chapter will present the main theoretical concepts of this study. The chapter is divided into four main chapters: (1) Talent Management, (2) Career Self-Management and (3) Gender Biases, especially how that affects the previously mentioned factors and (4) The Career Concept Model. (1) and (2) are two main aspects of Career Development, focusing on organizational and individual factors respectively. We will also include critical reflections on each of the four main chapters and the theories included, as well as relating hypotheses. Finally, we will provide the conceptual and analytical framework that is guiding our study.

To show the connection between the main chapters and the theories that we will present in this chapter we have made a visualization, as shown in figure 2:1 below.

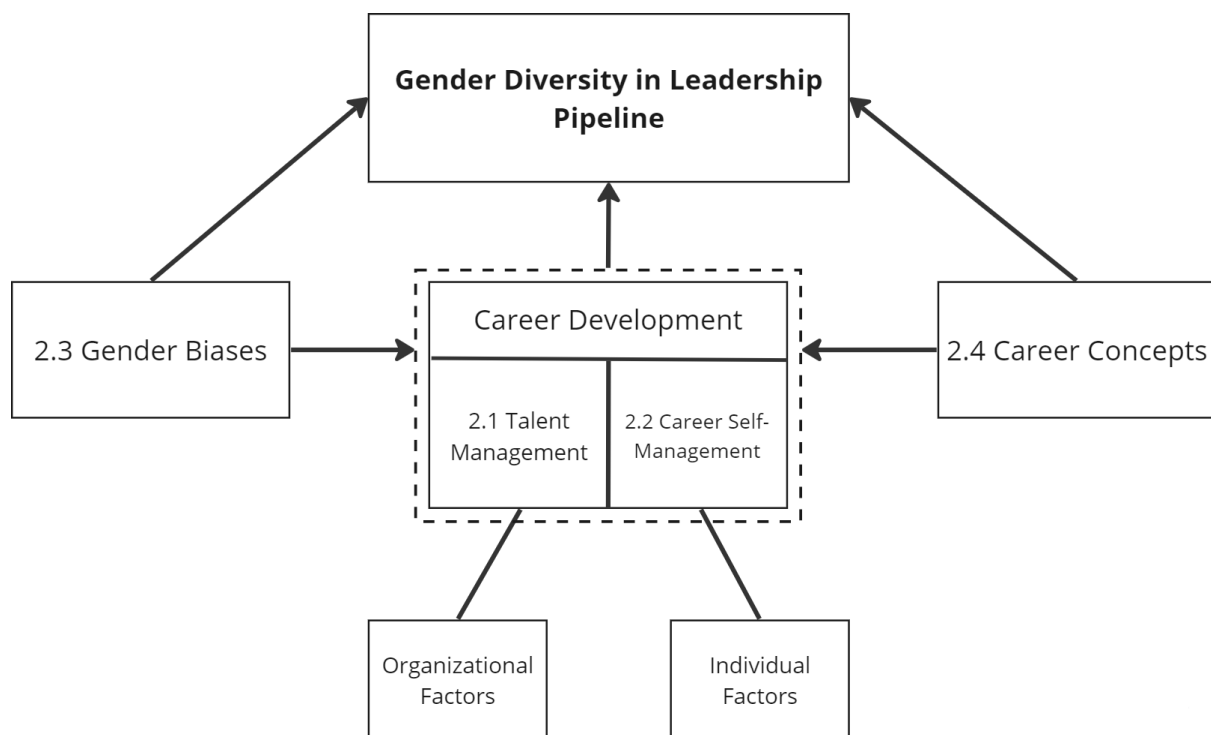


Figure 2:1: Conceptual framework

2.1 Talent Management (TM)

In this part of the chapter we will present concepts related to organizational aspects of career development, including the overall concept of talent management and moreover diversity management, organizational career management, succession planning and leadership pipeline.

Talent management has become a strategic imperative in the competitive business environment of today. It involves a systematic and integrated approach to attracting, retaining, and developing human capital to achieve organizational success (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). A strong talent management strategy includes various human resource practices, such as workforce planning, succession planning, employee development, and career management (Cappelli & Keller, 2014).

Moreover, organizations are important in facilitating career management for their employees (Hirsh & Jackson, 2004). Career management is a continuous, proactive process that also involves individuals actively managing and developing their professional skills and capabilities to achieve their desired career goals (Yarnall, 2008). By providing development opportunities, mentoring programs, and career planning resources, organizations can support employees in achieving their career goals and also increase the overall performance of the organization (Collings, Scullion, & Vaiman, 2015). The individual aspect of career management will be presented and discussed in the upcoming chapter 2.2 Career Self-Management.

2.1.1 Diversity Management

Diversity management is an organizational strategy that aims to create an inclusive work environment by valuing and leveraging the unique perspectives, skills, and experiences of a diverse workforce (Mor Barak, 2017). When organizations prioritize diversity management, they can broaden their talent pool, foster innovation, improve decision-making, and drive employee engagement, which ultimately contributes to better organizational performance (Richard, Roh & Pieper, 2013; Carter et al., 2003).

A key aspect of diversity management is addressing inclusion and gender biases, ensuring equal opportunities for all employees, regardless of gender or background (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Effective diversity management strategies focus on implementing bias-free recruitment and promotion processes, offering mentorship and sponsorship opportunities for underrepresented groups, and promoting diversity and inclusion initiatives (Ibarra et al., 2010).

2.1.2 Organizational Career Management

Organizational career management is a systematic approach used by organizations to support employees in their career development and align their skills and competencies with the strategic goals of the company (Greenhaus, Callanan & DiRenzo, 2008). Effective organizational career management can lead to promoting employee engagement and commitment, job satisfaction, and retention (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009; Noe, 1996). In other words, by providing employees with opportunities for growth and advancement, organizations can foster a sense of commitment and loyalty, reducing turnover and enhancing productivity (Kraimer, Seibert, Wayne, Liden & Bravo, 2011). This is because when employees feel that their organization supports their career development they are more likely to perform better and contribute more to the organization (Noe, 1996).

Organizational career management can be considered a key component of a comprehensive talent management strategy. By supporting employees in their career development through practices such as career planning, performance appraisals, training, and mentoring (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000; Noe, 1996), organizations can create a positive environment for employees. This, in turn, contributes to the successful implementation of talent management initiatives, as retaining and developing existing talent is crucial for maintaining a competitive edge in the market (Kraimer et al., 2011).

2.1.3 Succession Planning

Succession planning is a strategic process that identifies and develops potential future leaders within an organization to ensure the continuity of leadership positions (Rothwell, 2010; Garman & Glawe, 2004). This proactive approach prepares the organization for changes in leadership due to factors such as retirements, resignations, or unforeseen circumstances (Huang, 2001). Effective succession planning involves identifying high-potential employees, assessing their skills and competencies, and providing them with targeted development opportunities, such as training programs, mentoring, and job rotation (Dessler, 2017). This process aligns with the organization's long-term objectives and ensures the availability of qualified candidates to fill critical leadership positions (Charan et al., 2001).

Therefore, succession planning contributes to organizational stability and performance by minimizing the risks associated with leadership transitions (Kesner & Sebor, 1994).

Succession planning can also enhance employee motivation, engagement, and retention by creating a clear career path and demonstrating a commitment to employee development, by the organization (Groves, 2007). Thus, organizations should integrate succession planning into their talent management strategy to ensure a consistent approach to nurturing and developing their human capital (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). Furthermore, by investing in succession planning, organizations can safeguard their future success by maintaining a pipeline of qualified leaders ready to step into key roles when needed (Rothwell, 2010).

Moreover, diversity should be a key consideration in succession planning to ensure that the organization benefits from a wide range of perspectives and experiences. Organizations can use a variety of strategies to promote gender diversity in succession planning, including providing mentorship, sponsorship and networking opportunities as well as training and development for women. Moreover, having a diverse employee pool is needed to have a diverse succession planning (Greer & Virick, 2012).

Succession planning is also closely related to the individual factors of career mobility and perceived career success. Research has shown that career mobility is a key determinant of succession planning, as it enables organizations to identify high-potential employees who have the ability to advance within the organization. Moreover, perceived career success is important in motivating employees to pursue career advancement opportunities, which can also contribute to succession planning. According to a study by De Vos, Dewettinck and Buyens (2009) perceived career success positively impacts employees' willingness to participate in succession planning activities. Overall, an understanding of these individual factors is essential for organizations to develop effective succession planning strategies.

Succession planning and leadership development are interconnected, and to be able to build a steady and reliable pipeline of leaders organizations have to combine succession planning with leadership development (Conger & Fulmer, 2003). This leads us to the final part of the organizational aspects, the leadership pipeline.

2.1.4 Leadership Pipeline

Leadership pipeline is a concept that emphasizes the development of leaders at various levels within an organization, ensuring a continuous supply of capable leaders ready to take on new

roles and responsibilities (Charan et al., 2001) as it identifies distinct leadership stages, each requiring different skills, time allocations, thus emphasizing the need for targeted development approaches at each level (Drotter, 2011). The leadership pipeline facilitates smooth leadership transitions and enhances organizational performance by providing a structured framework for identifying, developing, and retaining high-potential leaders (Charan et al., 2001).

Implementing leadership pipelines helps organizations align leadership development initiatives with their strategic goals, fostering a culture of continuous learning and growth (Cohen, 2010). Therefore, leadership pipelines are a valuable tool for organizations seeking to maintain a continuous supply of capable leaders. By focusing on the unique requirements of each leadership level, it supports effective transitions and aligns leadership development with organizational objectives (Charan et al., 2001; Drotter, 2011). Auster and Prasad (2016) refers to various studies indicating that the scarcity of women in senior leadership positions and their limited access into these roles are consequences of the inadequate representation of women in the leadership pipeline.

2.1.5 Critical Reflection on Talent Management

Talent management is a critical aspect of career development. However, there is a potential risk of gender imbalances if these approaches fail to prioritize diversity and inclusivity (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). Organizations must critically examine their processes to ensure that they actively promote gender diversity (Ibarra et al., 2010). Additionally, organizations should engage in regular evaluation and monitoring of these initiatives to ensure their effectiveness in promoting gender diversity and inclusivity in leadership roles (Richard, Roh, & Pieper, 2013). However, even initiatives aimed at promoting gender diversity can fail if the employees do not actively participate. In other words, employee engagement is critical to the success of diversity initiatives, as they impact their effectiveness (Kulik, 2014).

To overcome these challenges and increase employee participation, organizations should invest in clear communication and education about the importance of diversity and inclusion and the goals of specific initiatives (Mor Barak, 2017). This includes fostering an organizational culture that values diversity and actively involving employees in designing, implementing, and evaluating diversity initiatives (Kulik, 2014).

Talent management frequently concentrates on high-potential individuals or those with remarkable abilities, often overlooking the larger workforce (Iles et al., 2010). This can result in the underutilization of the entire talent pool and may further existing biases by sustaining the belief that only specific individuals deserve development and advancement. An alternative approach could be for talent management to adopt a more inclusive focus, emphasizing the development of everyone within the organization.

2.1.6 Summary and Hypothesis

This first part of the theoretical framework chapter has been focusing on the organizational aspects of career development. These processes and initiatives are crucial for organizations to work consistently with to increase gender diversity in management and gain the benefits from it.

These mentioned concepts, including talent management, diversity management, organizational career management, succession planning and leadership pipelines are essential organizational strategies for cultivating and promoting internal talent to fill leadership positions. Using initiatives to improve and work on policies and training for the employees has been proven as a success in fostering natural leaders from within the organization (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000; Dessler, 2017; Noe, 1996). And if organizations have been successful in the initiatives, every employee will have the same opportunities to improve and utilize these opportunities. This means that the gender which feels that the organization has helped them in their career development more, the more employees of this level will be in top management positions. Thus, our first hypothesis is as follows:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): The gender which will have a higher index score in Talent Management, will also have the majority of managers in the leadership pipeline.

To summarize, the organizational aspect of career development is essential in promoting gender diversity, however the individual aspect is also needed for the success of these diversity initiatives in the talent management processes, which leads us to the next part of the chapter: career self-management.

2.2 Career Self-Management (CSM)

This part of the chapter will focus on the individual aspects of career management and development. We will give an introduction to the concepts of career self-management, occupational career patterns, career plateau, career mobility, perceived organizational support, and mentorship and networking.

Firstly, as mentioned above, career management is influenced by both individual factors, such as motivation, interests, and abilities (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994), and contextual factors, such as labor market trends and organizational policies (Baruch & Bozionelos, 2011). In other words, career management has a broader perspective on the development and advancement of careers, and is therefore related to both the organizational and individual factors. On the other hand, career self-management places more emphasis on the responsibility of the individual to manage their own career (King, 2004). It involves proactive behaviors and self-directed actions, such as setting personal career goals, seeking feedback, networking, and engaging in continuous skill-building (De Vos, Dewettinck & Buyens, 2009; Akkermans, Richardson, & Kraimer, 2020).

Career self-management has gained increasing importance in the dynamic and unpredictable labor market of today. The concept of career self-management has evolved in response to the changing nature of work, with factors such as globalization, technological advancements, and the gig economy contributing to the need for individuals to adapt and respond to new career opportunities and challenges (Spurk & Straub, 2020). This means that as organizations shift away from traditional career models, individuals are required to take greater responsibility for managing their own careers. Career self-management reflects the shift from traditional, organizationally-centered career models to more individualistic, boundaryless career models (Arthur & Rousseau, 2001; Rodrigues, Guest & Budjanovcanin, 2016), where individuals are responsible for navigating their career paths in a dynamic, uncertain labor market (Hirschi & Koen, 2021).

Research also found that individuals who engage in career self-management behaviors are more likely to experience career success, including higher salaries and job satisfaction (Strauser, Lustig, Ciftci & Hagiwara, 2015) and career well-being (Wilhelm & Hirschi, 2019). Additionally, individuals who engage in career self-management are also more likely

to succeed in their career goals (Fugate, Kinicki & Ashforth, 2004). Other research also found that career self-management is positively related to career adaptability, which refers to the ability to cope with career transitions and changes (Hirschi & Valero, 2016).

Furthermore, it is important to note that career self-management and organizational career management are not mutually exclusive but are expected to complement one another (Vos, Dewettinck & Buyens, 2009). Effective career management requires a partnership between the employee and the organization, with both parties taking an active role in planning and managing career development (Noe, 1996). This will be further discussed in 2.2.6 Critical Reflection on Career Self-Management.

2.2.1 Occupational Career Patterns

Occupational career patterns refer to the paths individuals follow within specific professions or industries, typically characterized by a sequence of positions with increasing levels of responsibility and expertise (Wilensky, 1961). These patterns provide insights into the factors that influence career development and progression within a particular field or occupation. Occupational career patterns are influenced by both internal and external factors. The external factors, such as changes in the labor market, can create new opportunities or challenges for individuals pursuing careers in specific occupations, requiring them to adapt their skills and career strategies accordingly (Baruch & Bozionelos, 2011). Internal factors such as education, skills, networking, and opportunities for advancement are some of the key factors that also shape occupational career patterns (Baruch, 2004). As individuals acquire knowledge and experience, they often progress through a series of roles, transitioning from entry-level positions to more senior positions, and eventually assuming leadership responsibilities within their chosen field (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009).

In the article *Why are there so few female leaders in higher education: A case of structure or agency?* (Shepherd, 2017) challenges the concept missing agency, stemming from a lack of confidence, ambition, or a propensity to avoid applying for higher positions, is the main problem for the underrepresentation of women in leadership. Instead, Shepherd (2017) underscores that there are structural factors associated with the selection process, such as career mobility and external career capital, conservative attitudes, and homosociality, that are the key contributors to the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles.

2.2.2 Career Plateau

Career plateau refers to a point in the career development of an individual where the likelihood of vertical advancement, increased responsibility, or significant career growth becomes minimal (FERENCE, Stoner & Warren, 1977). Women, in particular, often face career plateaus due to a variety of factors, including gender stereotypes, work-life balance issues, and the glass ceiling (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

This is closely related to gender biases, where gender stereotypes can contribute to the perception that women are less suitable for leadership roles, limiting their access to opportunities for advancement (Heilman, 2001), also relating to the concept "think manager, think male" that underscores the prevailing stereotype that leadership and managerial roles are more compatible with men than women (Schein, 2001). This will be further discussed in chapter 2.3 Gender Biases.

2.2.3 Career Mobility

Career mobility refers to an individual's movement and progression within or between organizations, which can be vertical (promotions) or horizontal (lateral moves), and may involve changes in job roles, functions, or industries (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). In this thesis, we are focusing on vertical career mobility, within the same organization, as mentioned in 1.5 Demarcations.

Career mobility, in the context of gender diversity, refers to the opportunities and barriers faced by individuals of different genders as they progress in their careers. Research has shown that women often encounter unique challenges that may limit their career mobility compared to their male counterparts (Eagly & Carli, 2007). One factor affecting career mobility for women is work-life balance, as women are often disproportionately burdened with family and caregiving responsibilities which can constrain their ability to pursue career advancement (Hewlett & Luce, 2005). Organizations can address this issue by implementing family-friendly policies and flexible work arrangements, which can facilitate career mobility for both men and women (Ibarra et al., 2010).

Another barrier to career mobility for women is the presence of gender biases in the workplace, including stereotypes and discrimination that can disadvantage women in hiring,

promotion, and leadership development processes (Hoobler et al., 2011). To mitigate these biases and promote gender diversity, organizations can implement targeted interventions, such as diversity training, mentorship programs, and sponsorship initiatives (Ellemers et al., 2012). This will be discussed in 2.3 Gender Biases.

2.2.4 Perceived Organizational Support and Commitment

Perceived organizational support and commitment are crucial factors in shaping the career development of employees. Studies have shown that when employees feel supported by their organization, they are more likely to experience higher levels of job satisfaction, commitment, and performance (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). Perceived organizational support can include access to professional development opportunities, mentoring programs, and career advancement resources (Kraimer et al., 2011). Organizations that actively invest in the career development of their employees are likely to foster a more engaged workforce, resulting in increased productivity and lower turnover rates (ibid.).

Moreover, employees' perceptions of organizational commitment to their career development can have a significant impact on their motivation and willingness to invest in their own growth (Allen, Shore, & Griffeth, 2003). This includes seeking additional training, pursuing advanced education, and taking on challenging tasks to enhance their skill sets (Noe & Wilk, 1993).

2.2.5 Mentorship and Networking

Mentoring and networking are essential tools for promoting gender diversity within organizations, as they help to address the underrepresentation of women in top management positions and foster an inclusive working environment (Groves, 2007; Ibarra et al., 2010). Mentoring involves experienced professionals providing guidance, support, and advice to less experienced individuals, often from underrepresented groups, to enhance their career development and advancement (Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000). Research has shown that mentoring relationships can significantly contribute to the career success of women, leading to increased job satisfaction, promotions, and greater representation in leadership positions (Groves, 2007; Ragins et al., 2000). Furthermore, Ibarra, Carter and Silvia (2010) refers to a 2008 Catalyst survey and discusses mentorship and well as sponsorship, where the mentor

actively promotes the mentee to higher management. However, research shows that high-potential women are frequently over-mentored but under-sponsored compared to men, hindering their career progress. Despite more women reporting having mentors, these mentors tend to have less influence within the organization, so despite efforts to develop women, men still received more promotions according to the survey and women were instead offered lateral moves.

On the other hand, networking is the process of building and maintaining relationships with professionals in one's field or industry, which can lead to new career opportunities, knowledge exchange, and enhanced visibility within the organization (Forret & Dougherty, 2004). Networking can be particularly beneficial for women, who often face limited access to influential networks due to gender-based social segregation and exclusion from informal "old boys' clubs" (Ibarra, 1992). By actively engaging in networking, women can broaden their professional connections, gain access to valuable resources, and increase their chances of career advancement (Ibarra et al., 2010).

Thus, mentoring and networking are crucial strategies for promoting gender diversity within organizations, as they contribute to the professional development and career advancement of women, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and diverse organization.

2.2.6 Critical Reflection on Career Self-Management

One potential challenge and limitation of the concept of career self-management is that it might put too much responsibility on individuals for their career success, potentially leading to stress and feelings of inadequacy when external factors, such as changes in the market or in the organization impact their careers (Rodrigues, Guest, & Budjanovcanin, 2020).

Moreover, the focus on the individual for driving their own career development, may overshadow the role of organizations in supporting employees through different initiatives. Hence, we can clearly see that self-career management is closely correlated with organizational efforts. As also clarified above, career self-management is connected to organizational career management and effective career management requires a partnership between the employee and the organization, with both parties taking an active role in planning and managing the career development.

2.2.7 Summary and Hypothesis

To summarize, occupational career patterns, career plateau, career mobility, perceived organizational support and commitment and mentorship and networking are all individual factors affecting the career development of individuals. They observe the possibilities the individuals themselves have to manage their careers. Utilizing the opportunities that exist creates possibilities for career advancement and development within the organization, which can create a more diverse workplace (Ibarra, Carter, & Silva, 2010; Groves, 2007). So, the more the employees use the opportunities that exist, the better equipped they will be to develop within the organization. And the better equipped they will be to develop, the more valuable they will be to the organization. Thus, our second hypotheses is as follows:

Hypothesis 2 (H2): The gender which will have a higher index score for Career Self-Management, will also have the majority of managers in the leadership pipeline.

For the female employees in the organization, Shepherd (2017) discussed and concluded that the main barriers for females to reach top management positions is not their own ability to manage their careers, but rather organizational and structural aspects. So, if one of their main barriers is that the organization is not offering them the same opportunities to develop, they will have to do it themselves. Thus, our third hypothesis is as follows:

Hypothesis 3 (H3): The index score related to Career-Self Management will rank higher amongst the women that are managers, than what the index score related to Talent Management will.

This chapter has emphasized the importance of career self-management for individuals, and these factors are also correlated to the organization in which the individuals operate. However, there are aspects affecting both the organizational and individual aspects of career development, called gender biases, which will be discussed next in chapter 2.3 Gender Biases.

2.3 Gender Biases (GB)

This chapter of the theoretical framework will specifically focus on gender biases, as discussed above, and barriers that hinder gender diversity in leadership pipelines. We will

specifically discuss the glass ceiling, gender stereotypes and moreover the relation between gender biases and the leadership pipeline and career development.

Bias is “*a major obstacle in the way of promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace*” (Stephens, Rivera & Townsend, 2020, p.1). The authors discuss the complex cycle of workplace bias and impact it has on employees from marginalized groups. They explain that bias can manifest in various ways, such as through microaggressions, stereotypes, and discriminatory practices, all of which perpetuate a cycle of exclusion. The biases can become embedded in the policies and practices in the organization, and thereby shape and amplify the biases (Stephens, Rivera & Townsend, 2020).

While in nearly all industries and geographies there has been a marked shift away from deliberate exclusion of women from the workplace, there continue to be cultural beliefs that lead to unconscious biases. This includes perceptions that successful, competent women are less “nice”; that strong performance by women is due to hard work rather than skills; and assumptions that women are less committed to their careers. In addition, especially in well-established, older organizations, workplace structures that were designed for a past era still, often unwittingly, favor men. Additionally, the historically low participation of women in the labor market have resulted in them having relatively fewer role models towards industries (World Economic Forum, 2016).

2.3.1 The Glass Ceiling

The glass ceiling refers to the invisible barriers that prevent women and other underrepresented groups from advancing to top leadership positions within organizations, despite their qualifications and achievements (Hymowitz & Schellhardt, 1986). These barriers may include stereotypes, biases, organizational structures, and cultural factors that limit the upward mobility of these individuals. The glass ceiling effect is also stronger at the top of the hierarchy, than at lower levels, becoming worse later on in an individual's career (Cotter, Hermsen, Ovadia & Vanneman, 2001).

Efforts to address the glass ceiling involve promoting diversity and inclusion initiatives, implementing bias-free recruitment and promotion processes, and providing mentorship and sponsorship opportunities for underrepresented groups (Ibarra et al., 2010). Breaking the

glass ceiling is crucial for achieving gender equity and maximizing organizational performance (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

2.3.2 Gender Stereotypes

"Think manager, think male" is a concept that underscores the prevailing stereotype that leadership and managerial roles are more compatible with men than women (Schein, 2001). This belief stems from the assumption that traits typically associated with effective managers, such as assertiveness, decisiveness, and dominance, are more common in men, while women are perceived as more nurturing and empathetic (Eagly & Karau, 2002). This stereotype can contribute to gender bias in organizations, leading to fewer women being considered for or promoted to leadership positions (Heilman, 2001), thus reinforcing the gender gap in management and perpetuating the cycle of underrepresentation (Ryan & Haslam, 2007).

Some may think that men occupy more leadership positions because they are inherently better leaders. However, research has shown that there are no consistent or significant differences in leadership effectiveness between men and women (Eagly et al., 2003). In fact, studies have indicated that women tend to exhibit transformational leadership styles more frequently than men, which are often associated with higher levels of effectiveness (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). Another argument that might be proposed is that men work harder than women, leading to their overrepresentation in leadership roles. However, there is no empirical evidence to support this claim. Research has shown that women work as hard as men and are equally committed to their careers (Hewlett & Luce, 2005). Moreover, studies indicate that women, on average, possess higher levels of emotional intelligence, which can be beneficial for effective leadership (Mandell & Pherwani, 2003).

“Organizations inadvertently undermine this process when they advise women to proactively seek leadership roles without also addressing policies and practices that communicate a mismatch between how women are seen and the qualities and experiences people tend to associate with leaders” (Ibarra et al., 2013, p. 62).

Becoming a leader involves much more than being put in a leadership role, acquiring new skills, and adapting one's style to the requirements of that role. It involves a fundamental

identity shift. The subtle gender biases that persists in organizations and in society disrupts the learning cycle at the heart of becoming a leader (Ibarra et al., 2013).

Further, the article *25 Years On: Reflecting on the Past and Looking to the Future in Gender and Management Research* discusses the growing awareness of the complex interplay between gender and management, as well as the need for organizations to adopt inclusive policies and practices to foster a more equitable environment (Broadbridge & Simpson, 2011). Furthermore, glass cliff effects may threaten the ability of women to be successful individually, while queen bee effects undermine the ability of women to be successful as a group (Ellemer et al., 2012).

In summary, gender biases and stereotypes as well as phenomena such as the glass ceiling and glass cliff can have a great effect on women's opportunities for career development.

2.3.3 The Relationship between Gender Biases, the Leadership Pipeline and Career Development

To further show the connection between the concepts mentioned in the previous chapter, this part will focus on the relationship between gender biases, leadership pipeline and talent management and career self-management.

The relationship between gender biases and the leadership pipeline has been a subject of considerable research and debate within the academic literature. Gender biases, both conscious and unconscious, can manifest in various ways within organizational contexts and may contribute to the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions (Ibarra et al., 2010) as it has an impact on the professional growth and advancement of individuals, particularly women, in the workplace (Cabrera, 2007; Eagly & Carli, 2007). One factor that influences the leadership pipeline is the presence of stereotypes and biases in hiring and promotion decisions, which can disadvantage women seeking to advance their careers (Eagly & Carli, 2007). These biases may be based on traditional gender roles or expectations and can create obstacles for women aspiring to reach senior management positions (Hoobler et al., 2011). Stereotypes and unconscious biases about gender roles often lead to differential treatment of men and women in organizations (Heilman, 2001). Women may be given fewer opportunities for career advancement and skill development due to perceived incongruence

between their gender and leadership roles (Rudman & Phelan, 2008). Leadership and masculinity are often associated in many cultures, where ideal leaders are seen as decisive, assertive and independent, similar to stereotypical male traits. On the other hand, women, expected to be caring and selfless, face a “double bind” (Ibarra et al., 2013), where women are penalized for adopting masculine leadership traits or criticized for being too feminine (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Furthermore, when women succeed in male-dominated areas, they are seen as competent but less likable. Assertive behaviors in women can be perceived as arrogant, while a feminine leadership style may lead to them being liked but not respected, seen as too emotional and soft for strong leadership (Ibarra et al., 2013).

Another aspect of gender biases in the leadership pipeline relates to the organizational culture and its impact on the retention and development of female leaders. Work-life balance issues often disproportionately affect women, who may bear more family and caregiving responsibilities, thus presenting challenges in pursuing leadership roles and can therefore limit their career progression (Hewlett & Luce, 2005). Organizations may inadvertently perpetuate these barriers by not providing adequate support systems or flexible work policies, further hindering women's progress within the leadership pipeline (Ellemers et al., 2012).

Gender biases significantly influences career self-management, presenting in various aspects such as access to opportunities, career advancement, and salary (Ceci & Williams, 2011; Eagly & Carli, 2007). One of the primary ways gender biases affect career self-management is by limiting access to opportunities. This bias can restrict resources, mentoring, and networking chances, disproportionately affecting women (Ibarra, 1993). The limited access creates barriers for women in obtaining the necessary support for their career development (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Moreover, gender stereotypes play a significant role in shaping expectations and judgments about competence and suitability for particular roles (Heilman, 2001). These stereotypes can lead to discrimination in hiring, promotion, and performance evaluations. Women often find themselves at a disadvantage, especially in traditionally male-dominated fields (Cohen & Huffman, 2007). The impact of gender biases on career self-management is also apparent in the struggle for work-life balance. Traditional gender roles contribute to the uneven distribution of domestic labor and caregiving responsibilities, which can negatively affect women's career self-management (Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer, & Robinson, 2000). Women often face difficult choices between career progression and family

commitments, while men generally experience fewer conflicts (Hochschild & Machung, 2012).

Finally, the wage gap is a critical manifestation of gender biases in career self-management. Despite numerous efforts towards pay equity, gender biases contribute to persistent wage disparities between men and women (Blau & Kahn, 2017). Women consistently earn less than men, which affects their career self-management and financial stability (Mandel & Semyonov, 2014).

2.3.4 Critical Reflection on Gender Biases

Eagly and Carli (2007) propose the labyrinth metaphor as an alternative to the glass ceiling. Unlike the glass ceiling, which suggests a single, invisible barrier, the labyrinth metaphor represents a complex journey women must navigate to reach leadership positions. This metaphor acknowledges the diverse barriers women face, including work-life balance issues and lack of mentoring and networking opportunities.

Research on leadership pipelines has primarily focused on gender diversity to understand the barriers and facilitators of the advancement of women into leadership roles (Eagly & Carli, 2007). However, this singular focus may not adequately address the experiences of individuals who face multiple layers of discrimination due to intersecting social categories, such as race, class, and sexual orientation (Crenshaw, 1989). This narrow perspective can inadvertently perpetuate inequality by overlooking the unique challenges faced by women of color, LGBTQ+ individuals, or those with disabilities, who may experience additional barriers in accessing leadership opportunities (Warner & Shields, 2013). For example, studies that only consider gender diversity may overlook the unique challenges faced by women of color, who experience both gender and racial discrimination (Crenshaw, 1991). But by taking an intersectional approach, researchers can develop a more comprehensive understanding of social inequality and produce knowledge that is more inclusive and applicable to diverse populations (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013). Although, as mentioned above in 1.5 Demarcations, we are not focusing on the intersectionality aspect of the leadership pipeline.

2.3.5 Summary and Hypotheses

To summarize, the glass ceiling effect becomes stronger the higher you are in the hierarchy, making it worse with level and age (Cotter, Hermsen, Ovadia & Vanneman, 2001). Thus, our fourth hypothesis is as follows:

Hypothesis 4 (H4): The Gender Biases are positively related to the higher managerial level and older ages for women, compared to men.

The relationship between gender biases, leadership pipeline, and career management and development is complex and multifaceted. Addressing these biases and implementing effective diversity initiatives can contribute to a more equitable leadership pipeline and promote gender diversity at all levels of an organization.

2.4 The Career Concept Model

The Career Concept Model, created by Michael Driver and Kenneth Brousseau, is a framework to comprehend and categorize how individuals approach their professional lives. The model is founded on the idea that every individual has a unique understanding of what a career entails to them and that this understanding can have a substantial impact on their career decisions and employment experiences (Brousseau et. al, 1996; Larsson et al., 2003).

2.4.1 Career Profiles

This model suggests that potential and current employees can be divided into four categories, or concepts, depending on how they view and are engaged by their careers. Furthermore, the model differentiates between four basic career concepts held by individuals. These four concepts encompass two primary conceptual factors: 1) the frequency of career change (durability in a given field) and 2) the conceptual 'direction' of career movement or change. These two factors eventually conclude in four primary and different career concepts, as follows: Expert, Linear, Spiral, and Transitory (Larsson, Brousseau, Kling, & Sweet, 2005). A comprehensive overview of the different concepts can be viewed in Table 2:1.

Career Concept	Expert	Linear	Spiral	Transitory
Duration in field	Life	Variable	5-10 years	2-4 years

Career Concept	Expert	Linear	Spiral	Transitory
Direction of movement	In-depth	Upward	Lateral related	Varied unrelated
Career Motives	Security Expertise	Power Achievement	Creativity Personal growth	Variety Independence
Career Competences	Quality Long-term commitment Specialization	Leadership Competitiveness Efficiency	Teamwork Skill diversity Innovation	Speed Flexibility Networking

Table 2:1: Different Career Concepts and related Career Motives and Competences.

Firstly, individuals who emphasize deepening their knowledge and specializing their competence in a particular profession, over being interested in managing others or moving up the hierarchy, are represented by the "Expert" pattern. Secondly, the "Linear" pattern refers to people who pursue a traditional career path, steadily moving up the organizational hierarchy and are typically focused on a single profession or industry and aim for progressively higher positions within it. Thirdly, individuals who prioritize gaining a wide variety of skills and experiences, often through transfers across several organizations, follow the "Spiral" pattern. They therefore often seek roles that allow them to use their skills in new and different ways, and their career paths tend to involve movement across different professions or fields. Lastly, the "Transitory" pattern, which prioritizes flexibility and work-life balance over professional progress and frequently has a high turnover rate, portrays individuals who see their professions as a means to an end (Brousseau et. al, 1996; Larsson et. al, 2003).

People might be drawn to different types of concepts depending on their career goals and visions, but that doesn't necessarily mean that they actually are motivated by that concept. According to Larsson and Kling (2017), we need to distinguish between the factors that actually motivate us (our career motives), and what we believe to be our ideal career (career concept). This is because most people are, through biases and others' opinions, lured into a certain belief of what their ideal career should look like (Larsson & Kling, 2017).

The model emphasizes that no one career concept is inherently better or worse than the others. Instead, the model can be used to understand individual career preferences and motivations, which can be helpful for career planning and decision-making. It's important to

note that individuals may also shift from one career concept to another over their lifetime as their interests and circumstances change.

2.4.2 Gender Career Differences and Motives

The article discusses the different views the profiles have on a successful career. For the Expert Concept, a successful career involves an in-depth specialization for a person's working life (Larsson et al., 2003). The Linear Concept instead focuses on a fast upward direction to higher management. These two concepts are more traditional, and are views often inhabited by men in corporate hierarchies and specialized functional silos (Larsson et al., 2003). The Spiral and Transitory instead focuses on more horizontal aspects. The Spiral sees a successful career as becoming a broader generalist in 5-10 years, and Transitory sees it as a varied change agent in 2-4 years. The Spiral and Transitory are more common amongst women, especially in horizontal and dynamic organizations.

2.4.3 The Career Lens of Success

The article discussed the so-called “Peter principle”, which is when people are promoted to their level of incompetence. The Peter principle refers to the consequence of the traditional Talent Management where the succession planning identifies the best performing employees at each level, and promotes them one level too far (Larsson, Brousseau, Kling, & Sweet, 2005). The article finds different success profiles at the different organizational levels and tries to identify the success factors by observing the career profile at each level for the top 20% best paid managers at each level, and bottom 20%. The career profiles of the top 20% best paid managers can be seen in the chart below, called “The Career Lens of Success”.

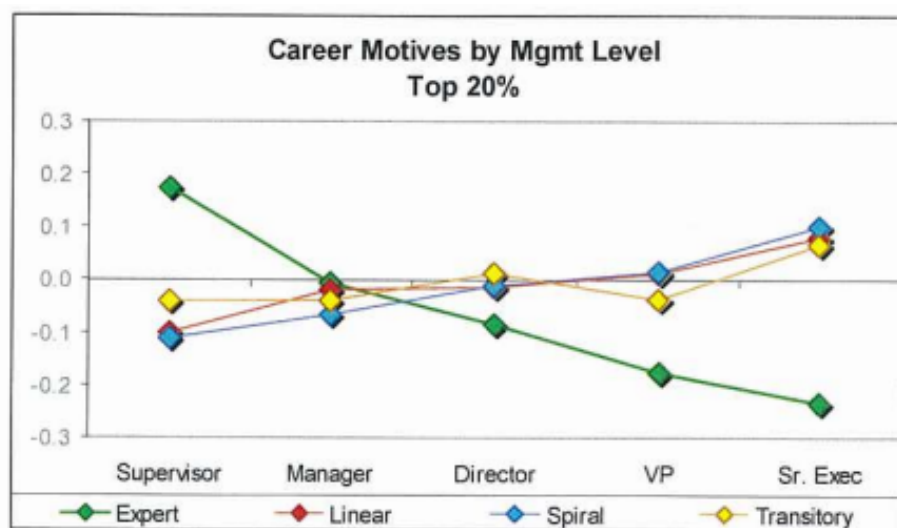


Figure 2:2 Career Motives by Management Level

Observing the figure 2:2, we can see that the different career profiles are more and less prominent on different levels, suggesting a dynamic shift when moving up in the levels. Most notably are the first level, where Expert is the most prominent profile, but that changes immediately at the next level, and it becomes a mix of all four profiles. The three highest managerial levels become a combination of Linear, Spiral and Transitory, and it becomes very clear that the Expert profile is less and less popular, so the managers need to adapt to the other profiles if they want to stay successful at their role (Larsson et al., 2005). The chart below displays the bottom 20% paid managers at the different levels, called “The Career Funnel of Failure”.

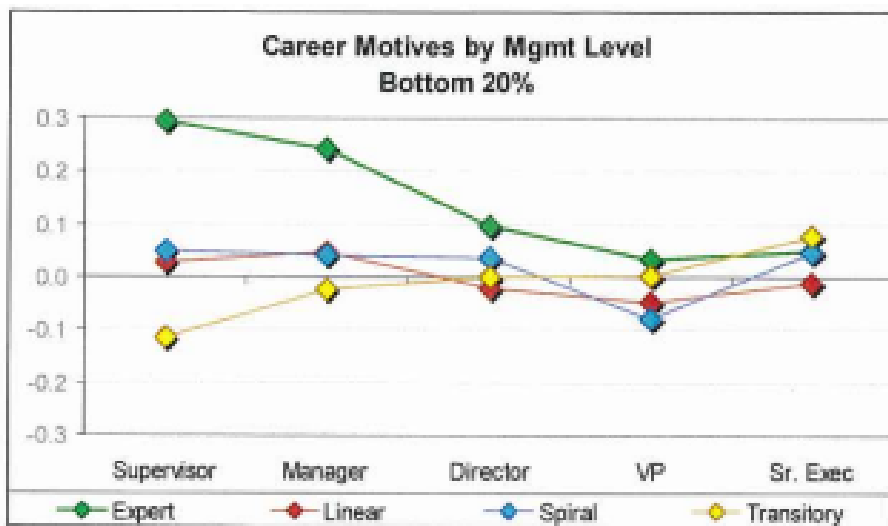


Figure 2:3: Career Motives by Management Level

When observing the least paid managers instead in figure 2:3, it reveals an interesting pattern. The first management level is more strongly Expert-motivated with the least transitory motives. This could indicate that the people who were specialized experts in their field got promoted, which they never should have. At the very next level, the average profile is very similar to the success profile of the supervisors. That is, they were successful supervisors who were promoted one step too far, which means that they could not adapt to the new requirements the higher level required. The top three levels reveal a similar pattern as that of successful middle managers, but concludes that the motives are not dynamic enough in relation to the increasing Linear, Spiral and Transitory, and decreasing Expert motives (Larsson et al., 2005).

Peters principle displays the risk with over promoting successful employees, where the reason for their success at a given level might not reflect the success profile at a level higher (Larsson et al., 2005). There is a need for organizations to not blindly promote the high performing employees as a way to reward them, but to instead offer training and development so that they can be properly trained to handle the higher managerial level.

Furthermore, we have established that male managers tend to have a higher Expert and Linear profile, while women tend to have a Spiral or Transitory. This would make women more suitable for higher levels, but that does not happen, since out of tradition and lower level performance, men tend to have the inside track to begin with and this stacks the leadership pipeline with men (Larsson et al., 2005).

2.4.3 Critical reflection on the Career Concept Model

As with any theoretical model, it is important to consider a critical perspective of the limitations when applying them. For the Career Concept Model, we first consider the simplification of careers as a limitation. By categorizing individuals into one of four career concepts, the model might oversimplify the complex and dynamic nature of careers. Career paths and motivations can be influenced by a wide range of factors, including personality traits, personal values, family circumstances, economic conditions, and cultural norms, many of which the model may not fully capture. Furthermore, the model primarily focuses on individual motivations and preferences, and may not take into consideration external factors that shape career paths, such as changes in the labor market or organizational processes and practices.

2.4.2 Summary and Hypothesis

To summarize, the career concept model reveals four different career profiles that can be used as a way to identify and group certain behaviors and characteristics of managers. As the more traditional profiles both Expert and Linear are more commonly inhabited by men, our fifth hypothesis (H5) is therefore:

Hypothesis 5 (H5): The Linear Concept will have a higher mean score amongst male employees, than female employees.

Furthermore, the characteristics of the Linear profile is the desire for vertical movement. And thus, our sixth hypothesis (H6) is as follows:

Hypothesis 6 (H6): As the managerial level increases, the mean score of Linear Motives will also increase.

Lastly, it uses the leadership pipeline and explains that in different stages of the pipeline, different profiles will be more or less commonly used. The career concept model will be used to identify different career profiles and motivations amongst our participants, to find patterns that can explain the lack of gender diversity in the leadership pipeline. When doing this, we will compare our results with the findings from (Larsson et al., 2005) which displays the “funnel of failure” with a major decrease in the usage of Expert profile when advancing in the managerial levels. And thus, our seventh and last hypothesis (H7) is as follows:

Hypothesis 7 (H7): As the managerial level increases, the mean score of Expert Concept and Motives will decrease.

2.5 Analytical Framework and Hypotheses

This chapter has presented the theoretical framework of this study. As presented in this chapter, gender biases has a great effect on the theories and concepts presented in talent management, as well as self-career management (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Hoobler et al., 2011; Stephens, Rivera & Townsend, 2020; Ellemers et al., 2012). In regards to talent management, the concepts discussed can be related to a more organizational perspective on the career of the employees, and how the organizations help them in developing it. This is in contrast to the career self-management concepts, which relate more to the individuals own efforts in advancing and progressing their careers.

The theories connected to the organizational and individual factors have shown to influence the career development of the employees. Furthermore, the four different Career Concepts presented above are also affecting the career development of employees as well as gender biases, which can have a negative and positive effect.

By measuring the different organizational and individual factors, along with observing the Career Concept Model, we aim to examine the career development of the different employees, in hope to explain the gender diversity in the leadership pipeline. The assumption we have is that career development is directly affecting the lack of gender diversity in the leadership pipeline. This framework also acknowledges that gender biases have a role in affecting career management. Gender biases are also directly affecting gender diversity, more specifically women, in the leadership pipeline, since women generally have a much more difficult time establishing themselves in the different levels in the leadership pipeline than men (Cundiff et al., 2018; Ibarra et al., 2013).

The analytical model presented below in Figure 2:4 is providing an overview of the relationship between the concepts and theories of this study.

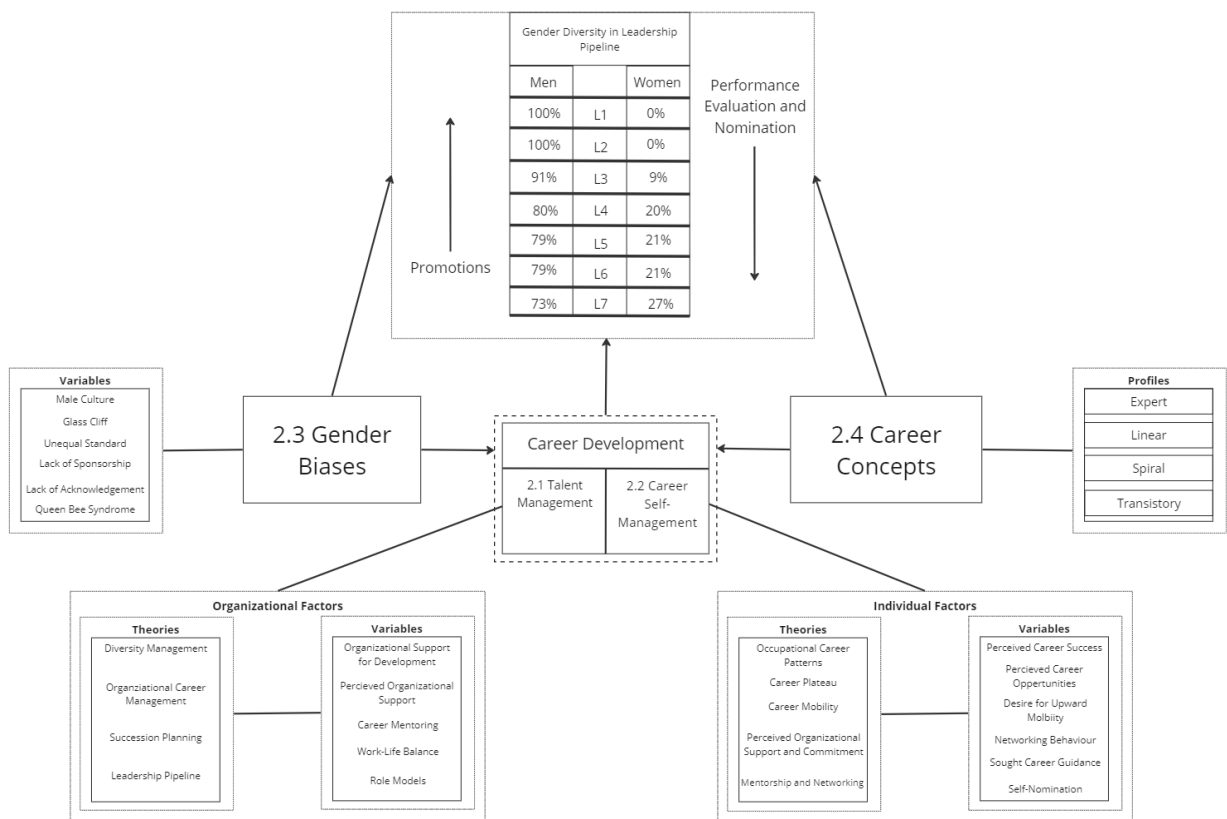


Figure 2:4: The analytical framework model, developed by the authors

Considering our own analytical framework, we think that it shows the connections between the theories and the correlations we want to explore in this thesis. However, we are also critically aware that this framework can be perceived as confusing for the readers to

understand, as there are many elements active within it. This can be further emphasized due to the fact that we have not introduced the variables yet, which will be expanded upon in the method chapter below.

Lastly, here we present a compilation of our hypotheses, that have been elaborated on in this chapter.

- **Hypothesis 1 (H1):** The gender which will have a higher index score in Talent Management, will also have the majority of managers in the leadership pipeline.
- **Hypothesis 2 (H2):** The gender which will have a higher index score for Career Self-Management, will also have the majority of managers in the leadership pipeline.
- **Hypothesis 3 (H3):** The index score related to Career-Self Management will rank higher amongst the women that are managers, than what the index score related to Talent Management will.
- **Hypothesis 4 (H4):** The Gender Biases are positively related to the higher managerial level and older ages for women, compared to men.
- **Hypothesis 5 (H5):** The Linear Concept will have a higher mean score amongst male employees, than female employees.
- **Hypothesis 6 (H6):** As the managerial level increases, the mean score of Linear Motives will also increase.
- **Hypothesis 7 (H7):** As the managerial level increases, the mean score of Expert Concept and Motives will decrease.

3. Methodology

In this chapter we will present the outline of our methodological approach and the design of the research. We will also present our data, and what data collection methods were used to collect it. Moreover, we will present the sample that we have chosen, how we will analyze the data and lastly a critical reflection on the quality of the research.

3.1 Research Approach

This study was conducted using a hypothetico-deductive method. This method uses deductive reasoning to test the theory and work from more general to more specific (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Thus, we initiated the study by examining the research surrounding talent management, career self-management, and gender biases to create a framework of variables that might affect career development. We could thereafter create hypotheses, which we can test by measuring the relationship between our variables in the framework in our data analysis. The benefits of using this method in a case study is that we can narrow the research down, and create hypotheses that we can accept or reject in real-time, gaining insight into how the factors surrounding the case can affect the different variables we use (ibid.).

Additionally, we used an inductive approach, which is useful since we want to examine the context of our study (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). This approach allowed us to investigate the phenomena observed in our specific case, and make more general conclusions about how the organization operates regarding our framework (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

3.2 Research Design

Our research design is a case study. A case study has the capacity to generate detailed insights and identify what is happening in the context of the specific case (Easterby-Smiths, Thorpe, & Jackson, 2015; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). In our case study, the subject is an engineering organization, as mentioned in chapter 1. Introduction. A case study allowed us to examine the framework using a real life example, observing the issue from various angles and perspectives, generating new insights and knowledge regarding the issue being observed (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

Furthermore, this study used a mixed-method approach, which has the benefit of allowing multiple research methods to address the research problem (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016; Bryman, 2016), offering several advantages of conducting a comprehensive study. This means that we adopted a qualitative and quantitative approach to the data collection and analysis so that we could acquire new perspectives on our research questions, increase credibility and provide deeper insights (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015).

Further, Creswell (2014) argues that a mixed-method approach helps researchers achieve a more thorough understanding of the research problem by capitalizing on the strengths of both methods, and compensating for their weaknesses. Using this can result in a more well-rounded perspective on the research question, providing richer insights and enhanced validation of findings. Moreover, Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner (2007) emphasize that mixed-method research facilitates the corroboration of findings, as using multiple methods can produce converging evidence for the results. This approach also enables researchers to address different questions within a single study, allowing for a more in-depth exploration of the research topic. Therefore we were also able to have many different research questions within the same research. Additionally, mixed-methods research can accommodate the diverse needs of various stakeholders, as it combines both numerical and narrative data to provide a holistic view of the subject matter. This was specifically important since we are conducting the research in collaboration with an organization that would like a more comprehensive view on the problem to then later find possible solutions for it.

The mixed method is designed using sequencing of methods (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015), in our case starting with the quantitative survey and analysis, followed by qualitative interviews to generate additional insights on the phenomenon. The quantitative survey was used to achieve an understanding on the perception of the employees, on the different variables regarding Talent Management, Career Self-Management, Gender Biases and the Career Concept Model. The qualitative interviews were used to investigate further the findings from the quantitative data, to enrich our insights. These two data collection methods, combined with the secondary data, allowed us to analyze a rich selection of empirical data to make conclusions regarding the hypotheses presented and create awareness regarding the barriers present at the specific organization. Our study is in this sense also cross-sectional, since we study this particular phenomenon at a particular time frame (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009).

3.2.1 Relationship with the Organization

As mentioned above, we are conducting a case study at an organization and therefore our relationship with that specific organization is important to reflect upon. The collaboration with the organization was initiated when the authors contacted the organization in search of an organization to collaborate with. In an initial meeting, the organization expressed the challenge of lack of gender diversity in their senior management positions. The overall subject that was researched in this study was something both partners agreed upon, and an NDA was signed before starting the study so that the organization could remain anonymous due to the revealing nature of the secondary data provided.

We believe that the relationship with the organization has had both an enabling and limiting effect on the study. The enabling effect has been the extensive amount of secondary data that we have been able to receive. The results from the secondary data is that we gained more in-depth and practical insights to the problem, and therefore better conclusions, which has a positive effect on the research field overall. Moreover, the collaboration has given us the opportunity to target specific individuals for collecting survey and interview data. The limiting effect is the fact that due to the NDA, some interesting data and information has to be kept anonymous. This also means that we can, in some circumstances, not research an aspect that we want. For example, if we wanted to investigate the relationship and difference between teams within the organization we could not, since this would make it much easier for the employees to identify people due to the characteristics of interviewees being revealed, and thus, the data would not have been that anonymous for them.

Furthermore, gaining access to an organization for research purposes is a process that often involves dealing with “gatekeepers” who control access to information and research participants (Bryman, 2016, p.151). In our case, we have had contact with two HR representatives in the organization, which have acted as gatekeepers. They have helped us with gaining all the secondary data and material, reviewed and made changes to the survey and also helped us send it out to the employees in the organization. Furthermore, they have collected the interview participants for us, based on shared insights from the survey. Bryman (2016) states that gatekeepers are usually concerned about the motives of the researcher, what the organization stands to gain or lose from the research, the potential costs in terms of staff time and resources, and possible risks to the image and reputation of the organization.

Gatekeepers often seek to influence various aspects of the research, including the types of questions that can be asked, which individuals can be the focus of the study, the amount of time to be spent with each research participant, the interpretation of findings, and the format of any report or presentation to the organization itself. Additionally, organizations are typically concerned about issues related to their representation and accountability in the research process (ibid.). This will be further elaborated on in chapter 3.6.2 Gatekeepers and the case study.

Once researchers gain access to an organization, they often find that navigating its complexities requires a constant process of negotiation and renegotiation of what is and is not permissible in terms of research activities (Bryman, 2016). For example, in our case, we had to address specific concerns related to maintaining the anonymity and confidentiality of the organization, as well as the appropriateness of asking questions about the business units in the organization and other potentially sensitive topics that could also disturb the anonymity of the respondents. For example, the decision to not include business units as one of the demographic questions in the survey was driven by the gatekeepers, to ensure confidentiality.

3.3 Data Collection

For this case study, we have used various methods of data collection to acquire the data needed for analysis. We initiated the data collection by receiving secondary data from the organization, which was analyzed to create a better overview of the current situation at the organization. We then conducted the survey, to test the framework and measure the variables. Lastly, we conducted interviews to explore the phenomena deeper and gain further insights and understanding.

3.3.1 Method for Theoretical Data Collection

The method for data collection of the theories and concepts presented in this chapter has been collected by using Google Scholar and LubSearch, as the two primary research-finding tools. By reading articles, we have seen threads of previous research that have improved the validity of the material collected.

We also made the conscious decision when using sources for this chapter to combine original and seminal articles with more recent ones from this decade. The research area that we are

studying, gender diversity in management and leadership pipelines, have been a subject of study for many years. These original and older articles can therefore provide us with a foundational knowledge and basic theoretical frameworks that helps to understand the development of a research area. However, more recent articles are essential for capturing the latest advancements, findings, and emerging trends in the research area. Using this literature ensures that our study remains relevant and contributes to the current reserach.

While searching, we utilized various keywords. Bryman (2016) suggests that for all online databases, you need to determine appropriate keywords to enter into search engines, helping you find relevant references. Journal articles often feature keyword lists. Additionally, you should consider synonyms or alternative terms and align your language with the source you're searching for. We started searching for articles and literature using keywords like “career development”, “women in leadership”, which eventually led us to concepts like “leadership pipeline”, "succession planning” and “organizational career management”. When reading the articles we continuously reviewed the reference lists and through that found other articles. This method is referred to as "snowball sampling" in the context of literature review and research (Bryman, 2016, p.202). In other words, this process involves using the citations and references in one article to discover additional relevant sources.

3.3.2 Secondary Data

The secondary data in this study was, as mentioned, received from the HR representatives in the organization. We chose to limit this data from 2020 to 2023, since we had to narrow our scope due to time limitations of our study, and the data from these years proved to be substantial enough. This data consisted of what Saunders et al. (2009) mentions is structured data, in the sense that it is organized and easy to process. The secondary data consisted of different spreadsheets with information, and the spreadsheets received are presented in the table below:

Spreadsheet	Information
Employee Data	Data on all the employees currently employed within the BU. Variables such as gender, level, title, country etc.

Succession Planning	Data regarding the internal succession planning in the org in 2022.
High Potentials	Data containing all the employees they have flagged as high potentials in 2022.
Employee Engagement Survey	Data from an internal engagement survey from 2022, was sent out to all employees. It contains information on how the employees view and feel about various variables regarding working at the organization. These variables are, for example, Engagement, Leadership, Innovation, Diversity and Inclusion.

Table 3:1: The secondary data obtained from the organization

Important to note is that when observing the secondary data we found that some of the spreadsheets contained some missing data on the various variables we investigated. Thus, we excluded the cases where the gender or level was missing, which decreased our sample a little, but not enough to make a major difference in the overall analysis.

Moreover, by doing a content analysis, we could observe and construct a leadership pipeline for the organization, so that we could get an overview of its current position (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). Furthermore, we received what Saunders et al., (2009) calls survey secondary data. This data was from the latest engagement survey that the company sends out to its employees in timely intervals, to observe what the employees are feeling on different variables (see table 3:1). This data was useful for us to examine and gain insights on potential variables that would be interesting for us to use, as well as variables that would yield inadequate results. For example, we chose to exclude questions specifically regarding diversity as the statement on “My company values diversity” was part of the engagement survey, which had a much higher employee engagement than we expected our survey to have.

Furthermore, by also conducting informative interviews with the HR representatives, we gained many valuable insights regarding the organization, the structure, culture and

specifically the gender diversity issues. We got information regarding the multiple initiatives that they have and their own observations and understanding of the issues, as mentioned in 1.2 The organization. Moreover, the HR representatives helped us understand the secondary data provided and how to interpret it.

3.3.3 Survey Design

The survey was created and sent out using Google Forms, an online digital survey platform. The survey was distributed through e-mail to all employees. An online questionnaire has the benefit of being an easy and fast method of collecting answers to analyze (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The employees had eight days to answer the survey. Before sending it out we received feedback from both our supervisor and the organization, we also did it ourselves a few times to see that it was user-friendly, and we made changes such as making sure that everyone actually sent in the survey by making sure that the “send in” button was clearly shown.

The survey we conducted is called a self-completion questionnaire (Bryman, 2016). Self-completion questionnaires allow respondents to answer questions independently, offering advantages such as cost-effectiveness, quicker administration, absence of interviewer effects, and consistency in question order. They also provided convenience to respondents, allowing them to complete the survey at their own pace. However, disadvantages of this type of questionnaire include the lack of assistance for respondents facing difficulties, the necessity for clear and well-formulated questions, and the inability to probe for elaboration on answers. Additionally, due to potential respondent fatigue, long surveys also may not be feasible (ibid.).

We used single-item variables, derived from multi-item variables, as a basis for our survey. Single-item variables are measurements in surveys that rely on just one question or statement to assess a particular characteristic or construct (Bryman, 2016). They stand in contrast to multi-item variables, which use multiple questions or statements to evaluate a more complex or multidimensional attribute. Although single-item variables are simpler and more concise, they may not capture the full complexity of a concept. Derived from multi-item variables, single-item variables can be used when researchers want to simplify their analysis or when they believe that a single question can adequately represent the construct of interest (ibid.). However, caution should be exercised, as single-item variables may be less reliable and valid compared to multi-item variables due to their limited scope. We had to consider the

advantages and disadvantages of redoing many of the multi-item variables that we found to single-items. The advantage was that we could fit many different concepts that we would want to study, without the survey becoming too long for the participants to get tired of it. However, the disadvantage is a lower Cronbach's alpha, resulting in reduced validity and reliability of the research.

The variables in the survey were answered using a Likert scale, ranging from 1 “Very Low” to 7 “Very High”, to see how much the employees agreed with the questions asked (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). With the nature of the Likert scale, the higher our respondents agreed, the more they agreed with the question asked. Three items were reversed (see Appendix 1), to increase reliability and prevent agreement bias. This means that, before analyzing, we have to re-formulate the question and do a reverse scoring, to get a score that is in the same direction as the rest of the items (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

The survey was created with the goal of measuring the impact the variables have on the career development of the employees, and in turn, the gender distribution in the leadership pipeline within the organization. We chose variables that were connected to the different parts of the related literature, with the goal of seeing the connection between the theories, and the career development of the individuals. The complete survey can be found in Appendix 1. We initiated the survey with demographic questions regarding the respondents gender, age, time at the company, country of work, level, if the respondent is a manager or not and also gender of their manager. These demographic questions in the first part of the survey were chosen to create a framework for the descriptive analysis, and an analysis of the leadership pipeline.

The other part of the survey was designed to include variables, based on validated previous research, that connected to the chosen literature and our conceptual framework. For the first part relating to Talent Management, we selected variables that included items which related to the individuals perspective on how the organization supports them in developing and supporting their career. These variables relate to the organizational factors relating to the career development of employees. The variables chosen from previous research for this part were: *Organizational Support for Development* (Kraimer et al., 2011), *Career Mentoring* (Dreher & Ash, 1990), *Perceived Organizational Support* (Kraimer et al., 2011) and *Hierarchical Plateau* (Kraimer et al., 2011). We created three variables on our own for this part which were *Work-Life Balance*, *Role Models* and *Performance Appraisal*. *Work-Life*

Balance was added to investigate how the organization's employees perceived the work-life balance, concerning that women often face difficulties relating to pregnancy leave and similar (Eagly & Carli, 2007). *Role Models* were added to examine if employees, especially the female employees, within the organization, felt that they had role models within the organization. Literature shows that one of the most prominent barriers revealed for women is the lack of role models (Koenig et al., 2011). Lastly, *Performance Appraisal* was added to investigate what the employees felt about the methods used to evaluate their performance. This is because the organization uses a matrix to measure the potential and performance of the employees. Our goal is to examine if women and men felt differently about how they were being evaluated since gender biases can greatly affect the evaluation process (Bohnet, Van Geen & Bazerman, 2016).

For the part relating to Career Self-Management, we wanted to examine how the employees managed their own careers. These variables relate to the individual factors that affect an employee's career development. The variables chosen from previous research for this part were: *Perceived Career Success* (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990), *Desire for Upward Mobility* (Wayne, Liden, Kraimer, & Graf, 1999), *Perceived Career Opportunities* (Kraimer et al., 2011), *Networking Behaviour* (De Vos, Dewettnick & Buyens, 2009), *Sought Career Guidance* (De Vos, Dewettnick & Buyens, 2009), and *Self-Nomination* (De Vos, Dewettnick & Buyens, 2009).

The third part of the survey was designed with variables concerning Gender Biases. These were selected from a study made by Diehl, Stephenson, Dzubinski and Wang (2020), which created a scale for measuring Gender Biases. The variables included concepts on: *Male Culture*, *Glass Cliff*, *Unequal Standards*, *Lack of Sponsorship*, *Lack of Acknowledgement*, and *Queen Bee Syndrome*.

The fourth part of the survey contained variables regarding the Career Concept Model, and included variables such as: *Career Orientation*, *Career Motivation* and *Manager Values* (Larsson et al., 2005). The variables regarding *Career Orientation & Career Motivation* allow us to investigate the career concept profile that the respondents have, both individually, but also for different demographic aspects, such as level, gender, age. The *Manager Values* variable gives us an opportunity to see the manager - employee fit, to observe how well the fit is between different levels of the organization.

The table 3:2 below shows the relationship between the variables and the theories in our theoretical framework.

Variable	Connection to theory	Question in Survey (See Appendix 1)
Perceived Career Success	Career Self Management & Mentorship and Networking	Q8
Perceived Career Opportunities	Career Plateau & Career Mobility	Q9
Desire for Upward Mobility	Career Mobility, Career Plateau & Occupational Career Patterns	Q10
Hierarchical Plateau	Career Plateau	Q11
Perceived Organizational Support	Perceived Organizational Support	Q12
Organizational Support for Development	Organizational Career Management	Q13
Networking Behaviour	Mentorship and Networking & Career Mobility	Q14
Role Models	Mentorship and Network & Gender Biases	Q15
Career Mentoring	Mentorship and Networking	Q16
Sought Career Guidance	Mentorship and Networking & Career Mobility	Q17
Self-Nomination	Career Mobility & Mentorship and Networking	Q18
Work-Life Balance	Career Plateau, Career Mobility	Q19
Performance Appraisal	Succession Planning & Leadership Pipeline	Q20, Q21
Male Culture	Gender Biases	Q22, Q24
Glass Cliff	Gender Biases	Q23
Unequal Standards	Gender Biases	Q25

Lack of Sponsorship	Gender Biases	Q26
Lack of Acknowledgement	Gender Biases	Q27
Queen Bee Syndrome	Gender Biases	Q28
Career Orientation	Career Concept Model	Q29, Q30, Q31, Q32
Career Motives	Career Concept Model	Q33, Q34, Q35, Q36
Manager Values	Career Concept Model	Q37, Q38, Q39, Q40

Table 3:2: All the variables and the connection to the theoretical framework and the questions in the survey

3.3.4 Interview Design

The survey has the objective of examining the opinions of the employees and managers, the interview has the objective of understanding why this is the case. Thus, the interview had a more inductive approach, since we were trying to fill the knowledge gaps we had from the survey. This drove the decision to have semi-structured interviews, to give us more flexibility in exploring interesting subjects that might arise during the interviews.

Semi-structured interviews encompass various situations where the interviewer follows a general interview guide but can modify the question sequence. The questions are often broader than those in a structured interview, and interviewers have the flexibility to ask additional questions based on significant responses (Bryman, 2016). Moreover, semi-structured interviewing is a research method that allows researchers to maintain an open mind, enabling concepts and theories to emerge from the data. In other words, we used interviews alongside our survey to better answer our research question about employee perceptions. We also made sure that the interview questions were not repeating our survey questions or the questions asked in the employee engagement survey conducted by the organization. Semi-structured interviews effectively explore perceptions and thoughts in greater depth. As mentioned above, the interview questions were partially based on the insights gained from the survey, therefore using an inductive method. The interview had the same focus as the survey, with the same general themes, but with the opportunity of exploring subjects that could arise during the interview. We crafted questions based on the insights gained from the theoretical review and the results from the survey and also formulated

sub-questions to provide the opportunity to further explore certain areas. The full interview guide is found in Appendix 2.

The interview guide was divided into five different themes to make it easier for us and the interviewee. We also added time intervals for each theme, to make sure that one theme did not take up too much space in the interview, and that we had time to talk about every theme. Before starting the interview we asked for consent for recording the interview and gave an introduction to ourselves and the research we are conducting at the organization. The first theme is focusing on opening questions to get the conversation going. Opening questions set the tone of the conversation and enable the interviewee to become comfortable according to Rubin and Rubin (2011) and it also helps establish a safe and friendly atmosphere, which is essential for building trust and for the interviewee to open up and provide more in-depth, honest responses (Qu & Dumay, 2011). We included a few demographic questions and general questions about the interviewee, their role, and the organization. Moreover, the descriptive analysis of the survey data made us aware of the differences in answers depending on if you had a male or female manager, so we wanted to further investigate this connection, which therefore also was included in the beginning of the interview.

The second theme is concerning career development, since that is both a central theme in the thesis and in our survey. The third theme is regarding mentoring and role models, as we saw that this was protruding in the survey. The fourth theme was role, responsibility and relationship with manager and subordinates. We finished the interview with a conclusion and gave the opportunity to the interviewee to ask questions. Additionally, the interviewees were asked to share how they experienced the interview and then they would be asked to share any additional thoughts. Finally, the interview ended with us yet again thanking the interviewee for participating.

Throughout the process of creating the interview guide, we were mindful to avoid overly leading questions, ensuring that the interviewees had the opportunity to direct the course of the interview. Sekaran and Bougie (2016) caution against using leading questions, which are those that prompt respondents to provide answers the researcher desires, as they can compromise the validity of the results. Although we strived to minimize leading questions, we faced challenges in this regard due to our pre-existing survey results and the need to

explore specific aspects, such as potential gender differences in experiences regarding recruitment, career development and the relationship with the manager.

We also chose to highlight certain questions to make sure that these were answered during the interview since it is semi-structured. The questions that we highlighted were also based on the result of the survey, specifically questions regarding the interviewees' relationship with their manager. This was an aspect we found relevant when observing the employees' responses on the different variables. The highlighted questions can also be found in Appendix 2.

Moreover, to streamline the scheduling process, Doodle was employed, allowing interviewees to view available time slots, select their preferred option, and receive a calendar invitation with the interview details and meeting link (Doodle, n.d.). Furthermore, in this thesis, Google Meet was used as the digital platform for the interviews. Advantages of Google Meet include free usage and the possibility to record (Google Meet, n.d.) and also it was directly connected to Doodle which made our scheduling process more effective. According to Cassell (2015), online interviews offer both advantages and disadvantages. On the positive side, they provide increased accessibility, flexibility, and cost-effectiveness. Participants from diverse geographical locations can engage in the interviews, and researchers can conduct them at convenient times for both parties. Additionally, online interviews can be more affordable than in-person ones, as they reduce travel and venue expenses. In our case, considering the large geographical spread of our interview participants, conducting the interviews online was the most relevant option.

However, online interviews can also present challenges, such as limited non-verbal communication and technological barriers. These interviews lack the richness of face-to-face interactions, making it more difficult to interpret body language and other non-verbal cues. Furthermore, potential technological issues, such as connectivity problems and differing digital literacy levels, can hinder the overall interview process (Cassell, 2015). To counter these challenges we made sure that we were at a geographical location with good internet connection, and with minimal distractions so that the interviews could be conducted without disturbance.

We also made the decision that one of us would conduct the interview and the other take notes and vice versa, but with the opportunity to add additional questions. We thought that this would make it most of a conversation and easier for the interviewee to feel comfortable.

3.4 Sampling

Since we chose to conduct a case study at a specific organization, this allowed us to also target a specific sample, which in our case was the employees of that organization.

The sampling process begins with the accurate definition of the target population (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016), which, in the survey, were all white-collar employees within the organization which is around 2,500. Given that generalizability is not a primary concern in our research, we opted for nonprobability sampling. However, this choice implies that the findings derived from the sample cannot be confidently generalized to the broader population. As Sekaran and Bougie (2016) note, researchers may occasionally prioritize obtaining preliminary information swiftly and cost-effectively over generalizability, leading them to choose non-probability sampling methods. Furthermore, we have used convenience sampling, which is one that is simply available to the researcher by virtue of its accessibility (Bryman, 2016), since we are conducting a case study. We employed the survey to all employees, since the research questions concerned all employees. We designed the survey in a way, with the many demographic questions, to create potentially interesting results and insights from all employees. Furthermore, we hoped that the more employees that had access to the survey will result in more answers, which will yield more reliable results.

When selecting interview targets, we created a sample group with different demographic characteristics, in hopes that they will reveal different insights regarding the data our survey results in. We will also consider what information the participant can have when choosing the sample group, based on the survey. We sent the request to the HR representatives, who then provided us with eight interviewees, and we then conducted six interviews. The demographic characteristics we requested were preferably spread out geographically, more in older ages but also someone younger, primarily women but also at least one man, and preferably higher levels in the hierarchy. Then the process of selecting interviewees were facilitated by the HR representatives in the organization, referred to as gatekeepers, and will be further discussed in 3.6.2 Gatekeepers and the case study. The interview participants were selected based on the

information they have, this is referred to as “purposive sampling”, when choosing people who can provide the desired information researchers seek to obtain (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016, p.248). Furthermore, this sample group was also chosen based on the availability from the organization, as some people might not want to participate in the interview, using a “convenience sampling” (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016, p.247). One type of purposive sampling is judgment sampling, which is when researchers specifically choose participants that are in the best positions to provide the information required (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016, p.247).

The interviewees were, as mentioned above, geographically spread out, which included countries located in Europe, North America and Asia. Table 3:3 below shows an overview of our interview participants. Their area of work is from different business units and concerns everything from IT to supply chain. Out of the six interviewees, four of them had people reporting directly to them. They were all on an upper (L1-L4) or middle level (L5) in the hierarchy, as shown in the table below. The transformation of levels will be further explained in chapter 3.5.1 Quantitative Data and presented in table 3:5.

Demographics	Gender	Age	Level	Time at organization	Gender of Manager
Interviewee 1	Male	55+	Upper level	6-10 years	Male
Interviewee 2	Female	35-44	Middle level	4-6 years	Male
Interviewee 3	Female	35-44	Upper level	2-4 years	Male
Interviewee 4	Female	18-34	Middle level	4-6 years	Male
Interviewee 5	Female	35-44	Upper level	6-10 years	Male
Interviewee 6	Female	45-54	Upper level	2-4 years	Male

Table 3:3: Overview of interview participants

3.5 Data Analysis

The data we have received in this study is both quantitative, with the survey and most of the secondary data, and qualitative, with the interviews and some other parts of the secondary data. Thus, we require different methods to analyze the data, and we will present the methods used below.

3.5.1 Quantitative Data

Before we could analyze the quantitative data, we first needed to prepare it. This included coding and editing the data so that the analysis could be performed (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). After the data was prepared, we displayed it in numerous ways, which we will explain more during this chapter. After presenting the data, we could then interpret it, to initiate an analysis and discussion to find the insights that the quantitative data contains.

Therefore, after the survey period ended, we initiated the process of extracting the data to Google Excel. Excel was used to organize and clean the data to make the entry to SPSS much easier, and it allowed us to screen the data for errors (Pallant, 2020). After we organized the data in Excel, we extracted it into SPSS. SPSS is a statistical software platform which allows us to perform a variety of analyses that can help us answer our research question, as well as prove or reject our hypotheses (ibid).

After we had extracted the data into SPSS, we noticed two responses which contained wrong information. Due to the nature of the demographic variable “Level in organization”, there exists only one person on level 1 in the organization, and the respondent who had selected that option was not that person, since the demographic variables did not match, and thus, that response was removed. Furthermore, another response indicated a person in level 2 of the organization, that we could, after observing the secondary data, conclude did not exist. Therefore, that response was also removed. There is a risk when doing surveys that the respondents enter wrong or faulty information, but after screening the data and not finding any information regarding the respondents levels that is factually faulty based on secondary data and our knowledge of the organization, we will assume that the rest of the survey data is correct. Lastly, two responses chose the option “Other/Do not want to answer” in the question asking about the respondent's gender. Since we will look at all variables from a gender perspective, we chose to remove these two answers to make the data easier to analyze.

With the data cleaned and organized, we initiated the descriptive analysis to find insights and interesting observations which could provide us with a specific direction to use in the interviews. Since the interviews were designed with an inductive approach, the descriptive data will shape the interview guide so that we can extract more data from the interesting connections that are visible from the survey data.

We started by presenting the descriptive data regarding our variables with the use of charts. This data was presented to display the results we received between the genders, to give insight as to how the two genders answered differently.

After presenting the variable data, and to simplify the descriptive analysis, we created index variables for our three theoretical concepts, (1) Talent Management, (2) Career-Self Management, and (3) Gender Biases. These index variables allowed us to compare the mean score for all the items within the specific concept, and observe the relationship individual variables have with the index variable. The items included in our index variables can be found in table 3:4 below.

Item/Variable	Index
Organizational Support for Development	Talent Management
Perceived Organizational Support	Talent Management
Career Mentoring	Talent Management
Work-Life Balance	Talent Management
Role-Models	Talent Management
Performance Appraisal	Talent Management
Hierarchical Plateau	Talent Management
Perceived Career Success	Career Self-Management
Perceived Career Opportunities	Career Self-Management
Desire for Upward Mobility	Career Self-Management
Networking Behaviour	Career Self-Management
Sought Career Guidance	Career Self-Management
Self-Nomination	Career Self-Management
Male Culture	Gender Biases
Glass Cliff	Gender Biases
Unequal Standards	Gender Biases

Lack of Acknowledgement	Gender Biases
Lack of Sponsorship	Gender Biases
Queen Bee Syndrome	Gender Biases

Table 3:4: Index variables

After creating the three index variables, we created cluster bar graphs to visually investigate the descriptive relationship between the demographic items of our sample and the items related to the index variables of Talent Management, Self-Career Management and Gender Biases. We also used crosstabs to investigate the data statistically. The cluster bar was a good way to indicate potential insights within the data, with Crosstabs allowing us to observe the relationship visible in the cluster bar graphs, by observing the numbers. Using these two methods, descriptive insights were collected and then used to modify the interview guide, resulting in greater insight.

Later, we will present the mean data of our index variables in regards to the respondents gender, age, level, time at organization and gender of their manager. We created new variables from some of our demographic variables to create a better representation of each variable, since there otherwise were too few respondents on the subsamples to enable a valid analysis. These variables included Age, Level and Duration at organization. The process can be seen in table 3:5 below.

Variable	Process of Transformation	New Variable
Age <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 18-24 ● 25-34 ● 35-44 ● 45-54 ● 55-64 ● 65+ 	18-24 + 25-34 → 18-34 55-64 + 65+ → 55+	Age <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 18-34 ● 35-44 ● 45-54 ● 55+
Level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Level 2 ● Level 3 ● Level 4 ● Level 5 	Level 2 + Level 3 + Level 4 → Upper Levels Level 5 → Middle Levels	Level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● upper Levels ● Middle Levels ● Lower Levels ● Unknown Levels

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 6 • Level 7 	Level 6 + Level 7 → Lower Levels I do not know → Unknown Levels	
Duration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <3 months • 3-6 months • 6-12 months • 1-2 years • 2-4 years • 4-6 years • 6-10 years • 10+ years 	<3 months + 3-6 months + 6-12 months + 1-2 years → <2 years 2-4 years + 4-6 years → 2-6 years 6-10 years + 10+ years → 6+ years	Duration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <2 years • 2-6 years • 6+ years

Table 3:5: Transformation of demographic variables

Afterwards, we created a new variable from the descriptive career concept data. This variable, *Primary Motives*, was created by looking at how each respondent answered the four Career Motives questions (See Appendix 1), which related to the Concept Motive. Whichever question the respondent gave the highest score when answering the survey also became the Primary Motive we gave them. Which items referring to the Career Motives can be seen in the table below.

Profile	Question
Career Motives	Spiral: Item 24. Expert: Item 25. Transitory: Item 26. Linear: Item 27.

Table 3:6: Career Motives Items

This variable was created to experimentally measure the fit between the respondents' primary career motives and which manager values they mainly experience. So, if a respondent's highest motives have the same career category as their highest manager values = highest fit = 10 and then a decreasing fit depending on how far apart these variables are along the career scale from most stable to most changing = high, medium and low fit = 9, 6 and 1). The equation to create this was:

Equation: Motives Manager Value Fit = 10 – ((Primary Motives – Primary Manager Value) x (Primary Motives – Primary Manager Value))

3.5.2 Qualitative Data

According to Sekaran & Bougie (2016) the analysis of qualitative data generally follows three steps. The first step is called data reduction and refers to the process of selecting, coding and categorizing the data. The second step is data display which refers to how you present the data. The last step is drawing conclusions from the data presented. However, it is not supposed to be a step-by-step process, but rather continuous and iterative (ibid.). The data might, for example, reveal to us insights that make us draw a conclusion, which then requires us to display new or updated data.

In this research, we began by transcribing interviews and then identifying common and recurring themes. We employed a deductive approach, seeking themes found in the literature and those included in the survey items and results. Simultaneously, we maintained an open mind to discover new themes, which was the intent behind using semi-structured interviews.

Thematic analysis is a common method for qualitative data analysis, providing a framework for managing themes and data. Although thematic analysis lacks specific procedures, the UK's National Centre for Social Research has developed the Framework approach, a matrix-based method for organizing and synthesizing data. This approach involves identifying central themes and subthemes from thorough readings of transcripts or field notes and organizing them in a matrix. Data is then sorted into core themes and subthemes within the matrix for each case (Bryman, 2016). During the coding of the interviews, we identified eight recurring themes; perception of manager, career development, organizational culture, role models, training, difference between men and women, role as manager and cultural differences. We therefore coded the interviews in relation to these themes. In table 3:7 below an extract from our thematic data analysis can be found.

Overall theme: Lack of Gender Diversity in the Leadership Pipeline

Theme/ Interviewee	Perception of Manager	Career Development	Organizational Culture
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Interviewee 1	<i>“very supportive”</i> (Q12)	<i>“I was recruited back”</i> (Q2)	<i>“I would say that the core values of the company are very strong”</i> (Q4)
Interviewee 2	<i>“Always available if I need him”</i> (Q12)	<i>“every year from my starting at [Organization] I have a promotion”</i> (Q5)	<i>“but the culture could be different from each [part of the Organization]”</i> (Q4)
Interviewee 3	<i>“I’d probably say that relationship is very good”</i> (Q12)	<i>“there’s a lot of scope for me to, you know, move upward if I wanted to”</i> (Q12)	<i>“I felt that there is some real thought around kind of company culture”</i> (Q4)

Table 3:7: An extract from our thematic analysis, using The Framework approach

3.6 Critical Reflection of the Research Quality

In this case study, we used a multi-method approach to collect and analyze the data. A multi-method approach, as defined by Bryman (2012), involves combining different research methods in combination to strengthen the validity and reliability of the findings. This approach has the potential to enhance the overall quality of the research by addressing the limitations of individual methods (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). Furthermore, we have conducted a case study, which can provide a deeper understanding of a subject (ibid.), but also could affect the quality of the research, including the lack of generalizability. In this part we will discuss the quality of our study in relation to these aspects.

3.6.1 Validity, Reliability and Generalizability

Validity refers to the extent to which the research measures what it intends to measure (Bryman, 2016). In case studies, using multiple methods can increase the validity of the findings by capturing different aspects of the research question and reducing potential biases (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). However, researchers must ensure that the chosen methods align with the research question and objectives and that each method is applied appropriately (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). In our case, we did this by making sure our sample for the survey was for all employees, to make sure we could properly answer our research questions.

On the other hand, reliability refers to the consistency of the research findings and the likelihood of obtaining the same results when the study is replicated (Bryman, 2016). Employing a multi-method approach can enhance reliability by cross-verifying the findings from different methods (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). For instance, if data collected through interviews aligns with data from a survey or observations, it increases the reliability of the study. However, researchers must ensure that the methods used maintain consistency in the data collection process and avoid any potential discrepancies (Saunders et al., 2009). By using the same themes and concepts in our survey and interviews we could use the data from the interviews to further investigate and understand the subjects.

Generalizability is another critical aspect of research quality, referring to the extent to which the findings of a study can be applied to other contexts or populations (Bryman, 2016). While case studies often face criticism for their limited generalizability, a multi-method approach can help mitigate this issue by providing robust evidence from various sources (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). By triangulating data from different methods, researchers can identify patterns and relationships that may be more broadly applicable (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). Nonetheless, caution must be exercised when generalizing findings from a single case study, as context-specific factors may limit the applicability of the results (Saunders et al., 2009). Another critique is the potential for researcher bias, as case studies frequently involve qualitative data collection and analysis. The subjective interpretation of data by the researcher may lead to biased conclusions, affecting the credibility and reliability of the study (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Additionally, case studies can be time-consuming and resource-intensive, particularly when they involve extensive data collection and analysis (Saunders et al., 2009). Despite these challenges, case studies also offer several benefits. They provide rich, contextual insights into complex phenomena (Easterby-Smiths et al., 2015), allowing for a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Case studies also facilitate the exploration of new theoretical propositions and the development of new hypotheses (Bryman, 2016).

Moreover, judgment sampling, though restricted in generalizability, may sometimes be the best sampling choice, especially when there is a limited population that can supply the information needed. However, it is not generalizable to the entire population (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016), but this is also not needed in a case study, where the most important aspect was to get interviewees and respondents that have specific insights. Thus, purposive samples

may provide interesting data, but it is crucial to be aware of their limitations in terms of generalizability (Bryman, 2016).

3.6.2 Gatekeepers and the Case Study

Gatekeepers play a significant role in case study research by granting researchers access to valuable data, resources, or participants (Yin, 2014). However, their involvement can also introduce potential challenges and biases that negatively impact the study. One potential issue is that gatekeepers may exert control over the research process, potentially influencing the selection of participants or the information that researchers can access (Bryman, 2016). This selective exposure can lead to biased or incomplete data, ultimately undermining the validity and reliability of the study (Creswell, 2014). In our case, the gatekeepers (the HR representatives) helped us gain access to secondary data and the interview participants. However, given that the HR representatives share our objective to understand the causes of insufficient gender diversity in the organization, they have no incentive to withhold information or to be untruthful.

Additionally, gatekeepers may hold vested interests or personal agendas, which may consciously or unconsciously impact their decisions and interactions with researchers (Creswell, 2014). This can result in the researcher receiving a skewed or partial view of the case, further compromising the outcomes of the study (Patton, 2015). To mitigate these potential negative effects, researchers should maintain open communication and transparency with the gatekeepers (Yin, 2014). Moreover, employing a critical and reflexive approach when analyzing the data can help identify and address potential biases that may have been introduced by the involvement of the gatekeepers (Creswell, 2014). In other words, while gatekeepers can provide valuable benefits in case study research, it is crucial for researchers to be aware of the potential biases and challenges they may introduce. We have throughout the process of collaborating with the organization and the gatekeepers kept an open communication, asked questions and given our honest opinions and thoughts to find compromises between us and the gatekeepers.

An additional factor to consider when conducting case study that involves the use of gatekeepers is the possible hindrance for interviewees to be completely honest in their responses, thereby affecting the reliability of the gathered data. In cases like ours, where the

gatekeepers significantly influenced the selection of interviewees, there is a risk of access being granted only to certain individuals, which might not truly represent the broader population. This could potentially compromise the generalizability of the study. However, in our study, we are using a purposive and judgment sampling, meaning we are not focusing on generalizing the results, more gaining insight from the interviewees that have information on the subject we are studying. Here, the gatekeepers played a crucial role in enabling us to delve deeper into the organization, gaining insights we would not have been able to on our own. They also facilitated the process of collecting potential interviewees that we would not have been able to reach otherwise.

In conclusion, the use of a multi-method approach in the case study can enhance the validity, reliability, and generalizability of the research. However, researchers must carefully select the appropriate methods, maintain consistency during data collection, cautiously generalize findings while considering context-specific factors (Bryman, 2016; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016; Saunders et al., 2009; Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). By also maintaining open communication and adopting a critical and reflexive approach researchers can also work to minimize the negative impact of gatekeepers on their study (Yin, 2014).

3.7 Alternative Research Methods

This research approach and design have allowed us to deeply examine one specific case, gaining valuable insights by using secondary data, as well as analyzing the results from the survey and delving deeper into them during the interviews. This has provided numerous advantages for our study. However, the broad scope of the survey may have caused some limitations, such as the difficulty and limitation in including multi-item variables and identifying the most relevant topics for this particular case. By instead conducting interviews before doing the survey, we could have better understood the important and interesting topics based on what occurred during interviews, which we could have then gained further quantitative results from the survey. This alternative method could have therefore ultimately improved and sharpened our thesis.

4. Results and Analysis

In this chapter we will present an analysis of the secondary data that we have collected, as well as an analysis of the empirical data, including the survey and the interviews.

4.1 Descriptive Analysis of Secondary Data

As mentioned in 3.3.2 Secondary data, and presented in table 3:1 we have gained a lot of data from the organization. This part of the chapter will explain it. From the interview with the HR representatives in the organization we gained insight into the challenges they are facing and the aspects of gender diversity in the leadership pipeline. We also gained many documents and information from them with data from the last three years, 2020 to 2023.

They use performance evaluations to measure the performance of the employees. These evaluations are done by using KPIs, which differ based on the department that the employee works within. According to their data regarding succession planning, we can observe that they have data on approximately 28% of the employees, which states when the employee is ready to succeed and in how many years.

To further gain perspective on the succession planning, we can use the data we have received on the employees in the organization, and see how many of the different genders that are nominated. This allows us to see if the number of employees in the different levels is representative of the organization as a whole. See table 4:1 below.

Total Employees in Succession Planning	Out of all Female Nominees: Male Managers nominated 43% of all female employees nominated Female Managers nominated 57% of all female employees nominated	Out of all Male Nominees: Male Managers nominated 91% of all male employees nominated Female Managers nominated 9% of all male employees nominated
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Table 4:1: Total employees in Succession Planning

Level	Percentage of employees in Level	Percentage of total nominations in Level
Upper Levels Level 4,3,2	Percentage of employees in Upper Levels Female 24% Male 76%	Percentage of total nominations in Upper Levels Female 35% Male 65%
Middle Levels Level 5	Percentage of employees in Middle Levels Female 28% Male 72%	Percentage of total nominations in Middle Levels Female 25% Male 75%
Lower Levels Level 8,7,6	Percentage of employees in Lower Levels Female 32% Male 68%	Percentage of total nominations in Lower Levels Female 30% Male 70%

Table 4:2: Nominated men and women on different levels

As visible in table 4:2, there is a small underrepresentation of female employees being nominated in the upper levels (2%) and middle levels (3%). But for the lower levels, the female employees are instead over-represented, with 35% of the employees nominated in the lower levels being female, while only representing 24% of employees at those levels. This can create further problems for the organization in the long run, as the leadership pipeline will increase in male employees as they become ready to advance to new positions, while the female employees being nominated for succession in the upper levels will find themselves in a roadblock, as the positions available will decrease with every level.

Level	Percentage of employees	Percentage of total nominations
Upper Levels	Percentage of employees in	Percentage of total

Level 4,3,2	upper Levels Female 24% Male 76%	nominations in upper Levels No Data
Middle Levels Level 5	Percentage of employees in Middle Levels Female 28% Male 72%	Percentage of total nominations in Middle Levels Female 20% Male 80%
Lower Levels Level 8,7,6	Percentage of employees in Lower Levels Female 32% Male 68%	Percentage of total nominations in Lower Levels Female 26% Male 74%

Table 4:3: High potential men and women on different levels

Out of all the white-collar workers in the organization, which are our sample, 12% of them are identified as High Potentials. Out of these, 26% of the High Potentials are female, and 74% are male.

The table 4:3 above displays the High Potentials in the organization according to the level. The interesting numbers are visible when observing the difference between how many of the male and female employees that are nominated as High Potentials, in contrast to how many male and female employees there are at the respective levels. For the lower levels, female employees were 32% of the workforce, but were only seen as 26% of the high potentials in those levels. For the middle levels the same phenomena can be seen, as the female employees are 28% of the workforce, but only 20% of the high potentials. There was no data available for the upper levels, but we can assume that those at the upper levels are to be seen as high potential employees who consistently perform over expectations.

According to the engagement survey the organization conducted in 2022, they got a 85% response rate. The survey investigated the perceptions of different subjects such as Engagement, Leadership and Diversity and Inclusion. Observing the subjects based on the gender of the employee revealed no noticeable differences. The most notable insights gained from this survey is that the older the employees get, the less satisfied they are in the organization. The same goes for which level the employee has, where the lower level employees are generally less satisfied regarding the different subjects than what the upper level employees are.

4.2 Descriptive Analysis of Survey Data

We had a total of 110 respondents but since we had to remove four, this resulted in 106 respondent answers (see chapter 3.5.1 Quantitative Data) and 46 variable items, including the demographic items, resulting in a lot of data that can be presented. We will start by presenting our demographic variables, then we will present our variables connected to Talent Management, Career Self-Management and Gender Bias. When presenting this data, we will use charts that display the percentage of how many of the female and male employees respectively that chose the given option.

We will then present data connected to our index variables, and investigate relationships between our demographic variables and the index variables. This includes a section investigating the gender of the respondents manager compared to the variables. Lastly, we will present the data connected to the Career Concept model.

Below you will find different charts that display our data regarding our demographic variables from our survey.

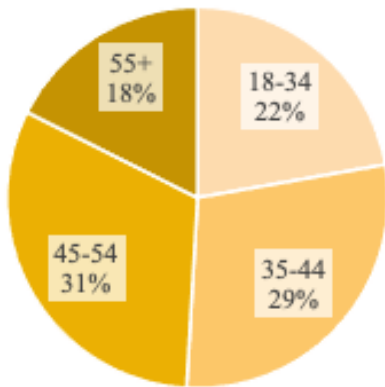


Figure 4:1: Distribution on age

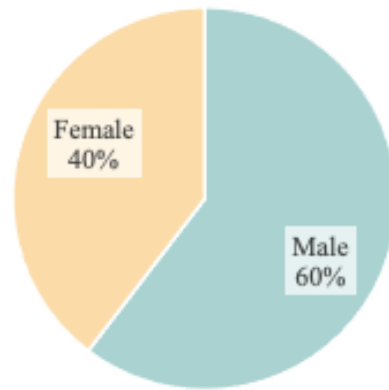


Figure 4:2: Distribution on gender

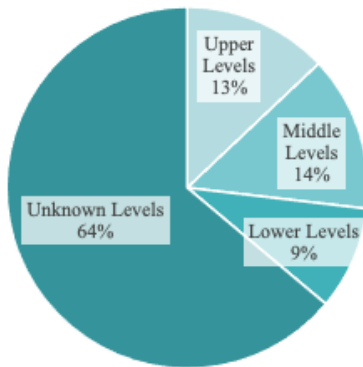


Figure 4:3: Distribution on levels

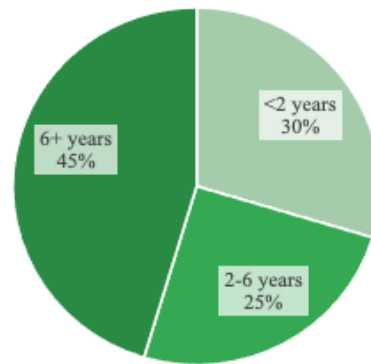


Figure 4:4: Distribution on duration

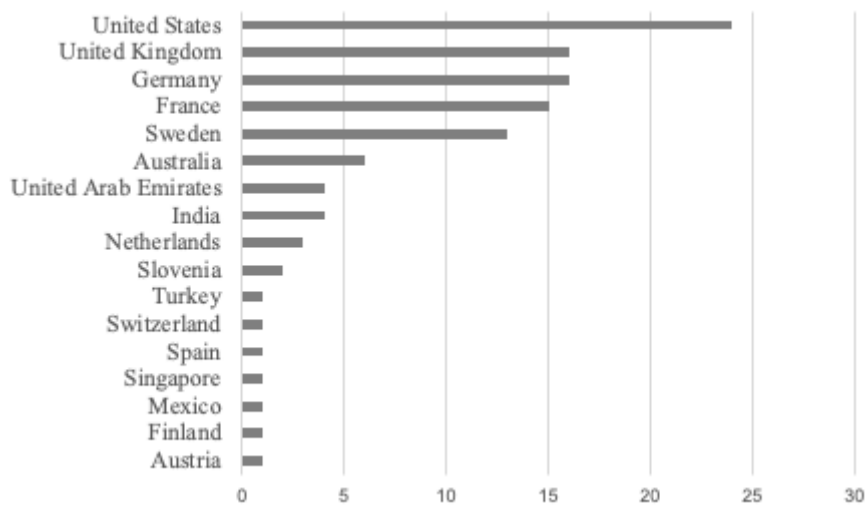


Figure 4:5: Distribution on countries

Our sample of respondents is somewhat representative of the organization in regards to the demographic variables. Comparing the gender distribution, our sample contains approximately 10% less male employees, while having 10% more female employees. Concerning the age of the respondents, we had approximately 10% more on both 35-44 and 45-54, while having approximately 5% less on the other age groups. Regarding the levels, we had approximately 10% more for the upper and middle levels combined. We had close to 40% less in the lower levels. For countries, we had respondents from approximately 50% of the countries that the organization is operating within. The duration of the employment of our respondents was somewhat similar to the organization, with the biggest difference in <2 years where we had about 5% less. We had approximately 30% more managers answering the survey, compared to the total in the organization.

Lastly, we will not present data specifically comparing the managers and employees. The findings reveal that the managers have a minor difference in a higher mean score for TM, CSM and a lower mean score for GB, compared to employees that are not managers. These findings are similar to those found in the engagement survey, and thus, reveal no new information and are thus not worth investing further.

4.2.1 Talent Management

In this part we will present the variables related to the main concept Talent Management.

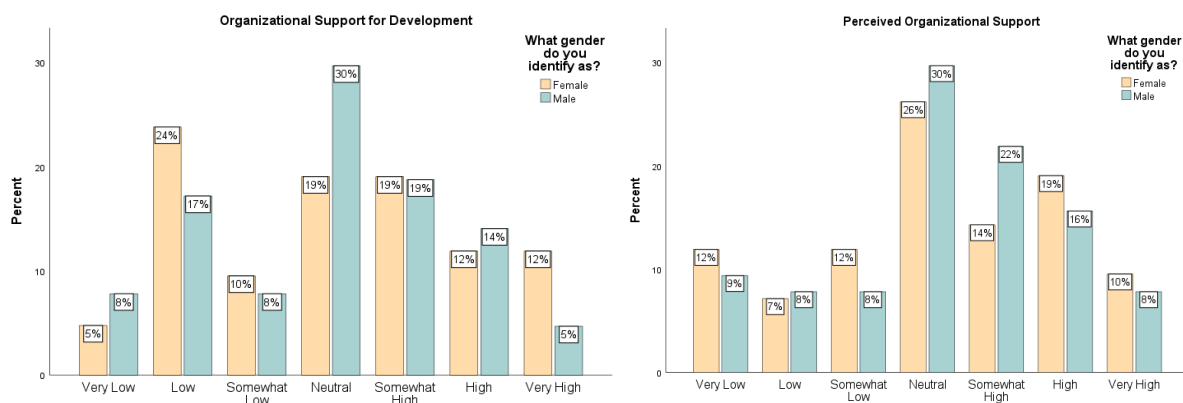


Figure 4:6: Organizational support for Development & Figure 4:7 Perceived Organizational Support

Both Organizational Support for Development and Perceived Organizational Support, that relate to the support and development the organization provides to the employees, revealed somewhat similar scores (see figure 4:6 and 4:7). Organizational Support for Development

had more evenly divided scores both for male and female employees, while Perceived Organizational Support showed a more positive response both for female and male employees.

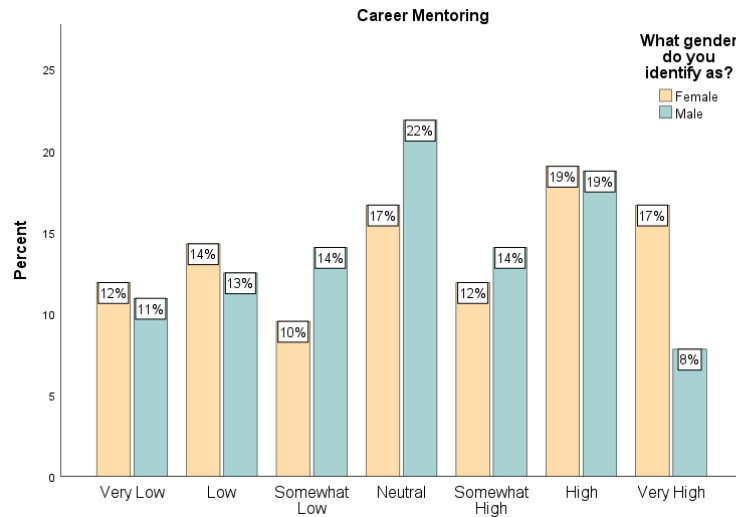


Figure 4:8: Career Mentoring

Career Mentoring has an almost evenly distributed score between the male and female employees, with male employees being the only one having more than 20% choosing an option, with 22% picking neutral (see figure 4:8). Interestingly, 17% of the female employees chose very high, while only 9% percent of the male employees chose that.



Figure 4:9: Work-Life Balance

For Work-Life Balance, the majority of responses were positive, with only 19% of female and 23% of male employees choosing a lower option than neutral (see figure 4:9).

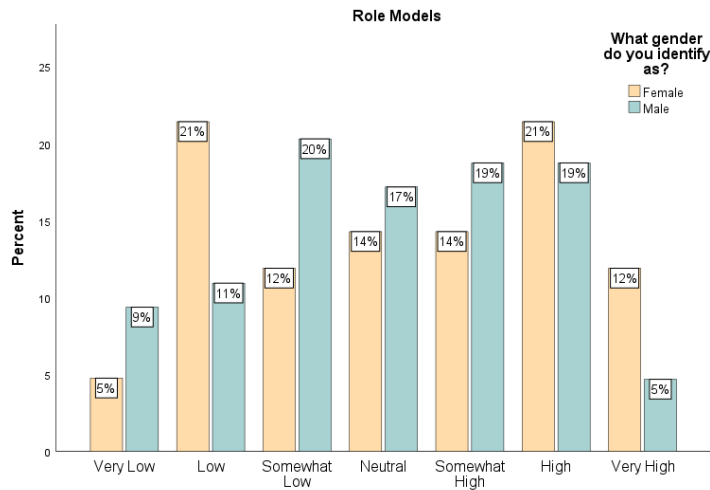


Figure 4:10: Role-Models

The opinion of the representation of Role Models at the organizations proves to be very varied. Approximately 40% of the employees felt a low representation, while approximately 45% of the employees felt a high representation (see figure 4:10). The same amount of female employees chose low, and high as the options which shows that the opinion regarding role models is split.

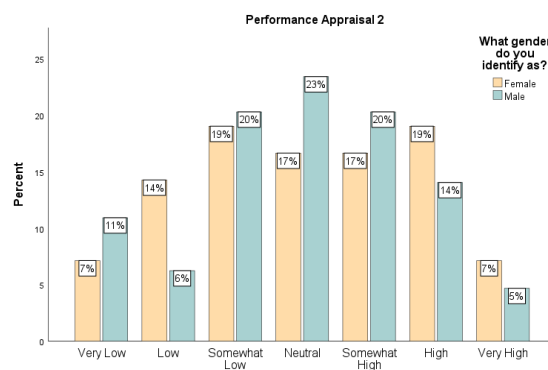
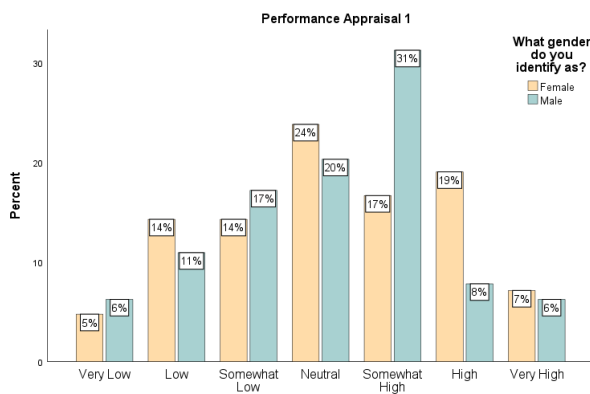


Figure 4:11 Performance Appraisal 1 & Figure 4:12 Performance Appraisal 2

Both questions regarding Performance Appraisal display similar numbers, with both having even distributed numbers amongst the negative and positive options (see figure 4:11 and figure 4:12).

4.2.2 Career Self-Management

In this part we will present the variables related to the main concept Career Self-Management.

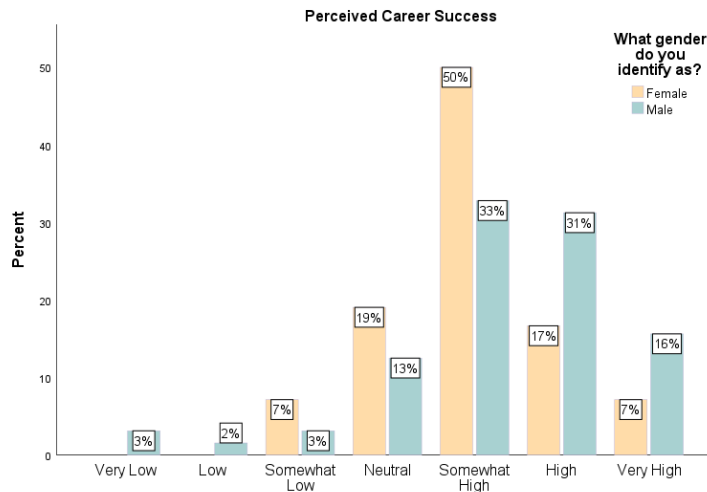


Figure 4:13: Perceived Career Success

The Perceived Career Success of the employees reveal a majority of the employees are satisfied with their careers, with only 15% picking a lower option than neutral (see figure 4:13). Interestingly, 50% of the female employees chose “Somewhat High” as their response, signaling a positive opinion, but the weakest positive option.

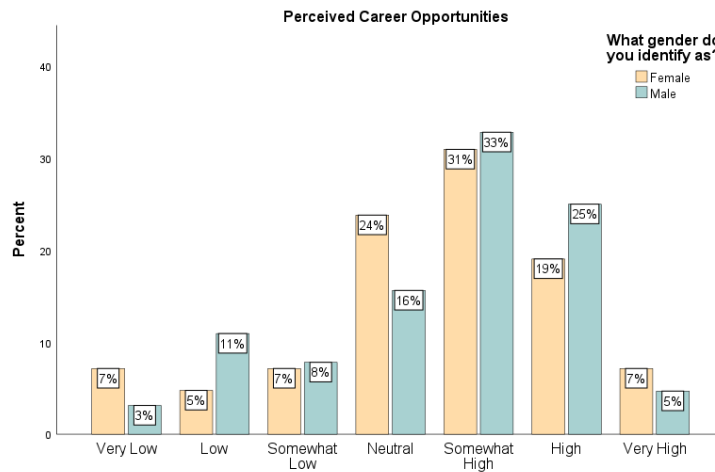


Figure 4:14: Perceived Career Opportunities

The answers reveal that approximately 60% of the employees felt that there existed attractive career opportunities within the organization. Approximately 20% chose the options lower than neutral (see figure 4:14).

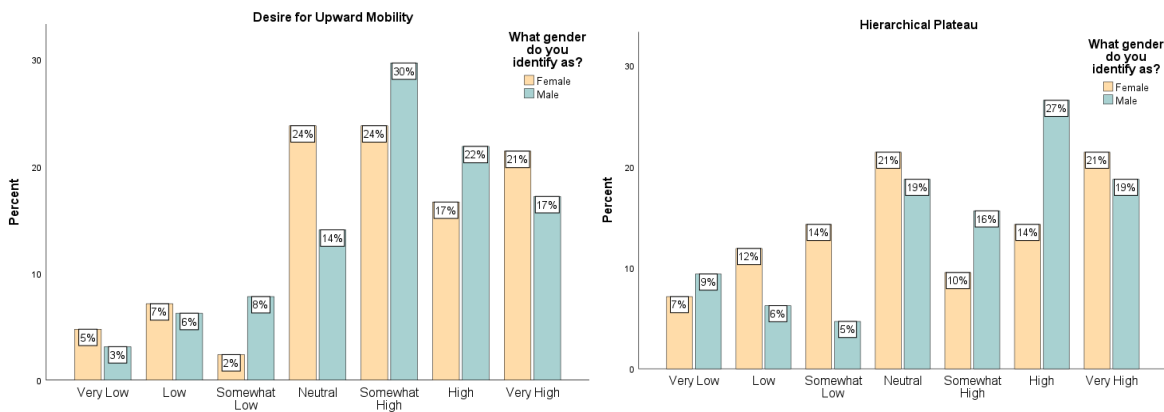


Figure 4:15: Desire for Upward Mobility & Figure 4:16: Hierarchical Plateau

A majority of the employees felt that moving up hierarchically was important to them, with 62% of the females and 69% of the male employees choosing the higher options (see figure 4:15). At the same time, 45% of the female employees and 62% of the male employees felt that they would not move much higher hierarchically (see figure 4:16). 31% of the female employees chose the options lower than neutral, signaling a trust in the ability to move hierarchically, while only 20% of the male employees chose this option.

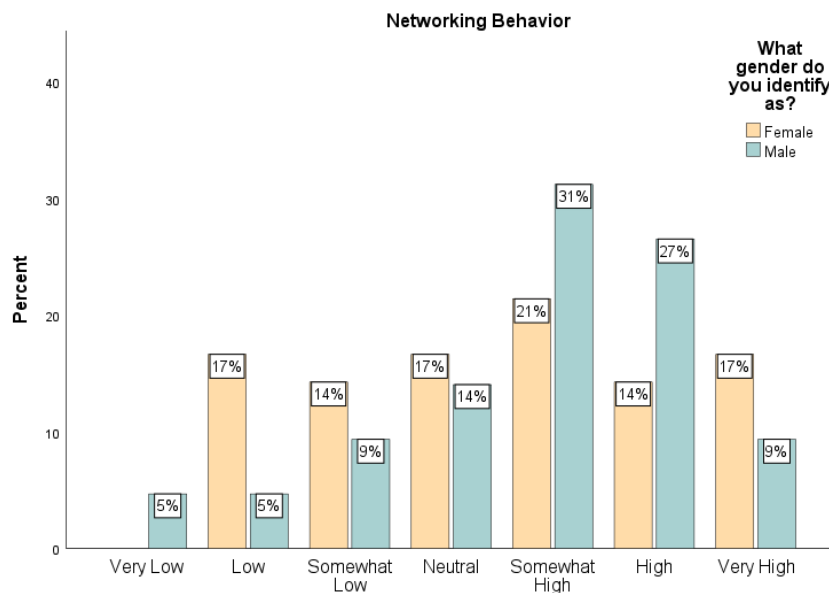


Figure 4:17: Networking Behavior

For the female employees, the opinion on whether they attempt to interact with influential people was divided amongst the different options, with every option being selected by approximately 17% of the employees, except “Very Low” (see figure 4:17). For the male employees, only 19% chose the negative options, and 67% chose the more positive options, revealing a more positive opinion of interacting amongst the male employees.

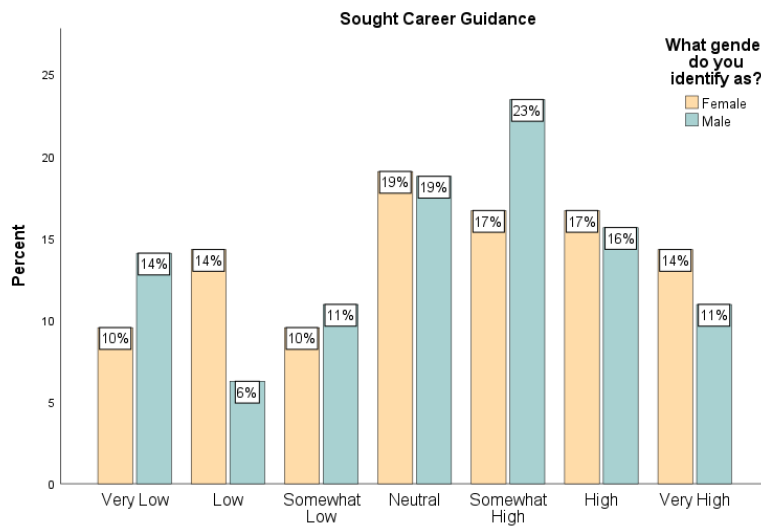


Figure 4:18: Sought Career Guidance

Asking for career guidance shows varied responses (see figure 4:18), with the majority being positive for both female (48%) and male (50%) employees. 34% of the female employees, and 31% of the male employees, picked the lower options.

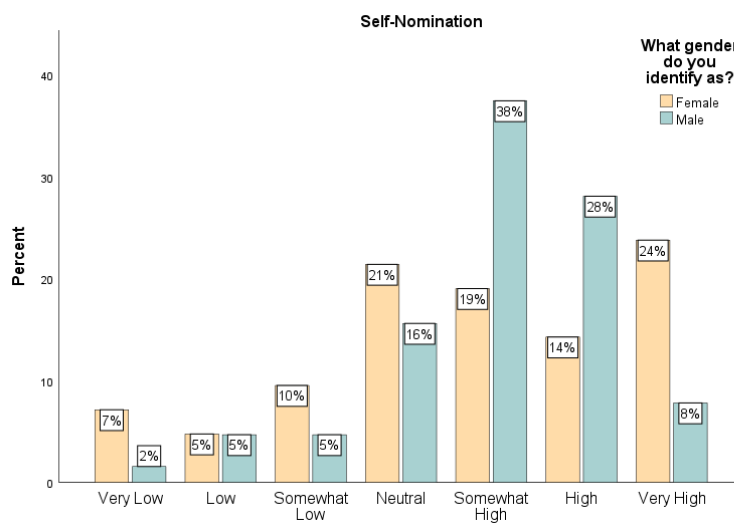


Figure 4:19: Self-Nomination

Self-Nomination reveals that a majority of the employees make their manager aware of their accomplishments (see figure 4:19). Interestingly enough, there were more male employees that picked the options “Somewhat High” (38%) and “High” (28%) options, compared to the female employees (19%) and (14%). But for the option “Very High”, a fourth (25%) of the female employees chose that option, compared to only 8% of the male employees.

4.2.3 Gender Bias

In this part we will present the variables related to the main concept, Gender Bias.

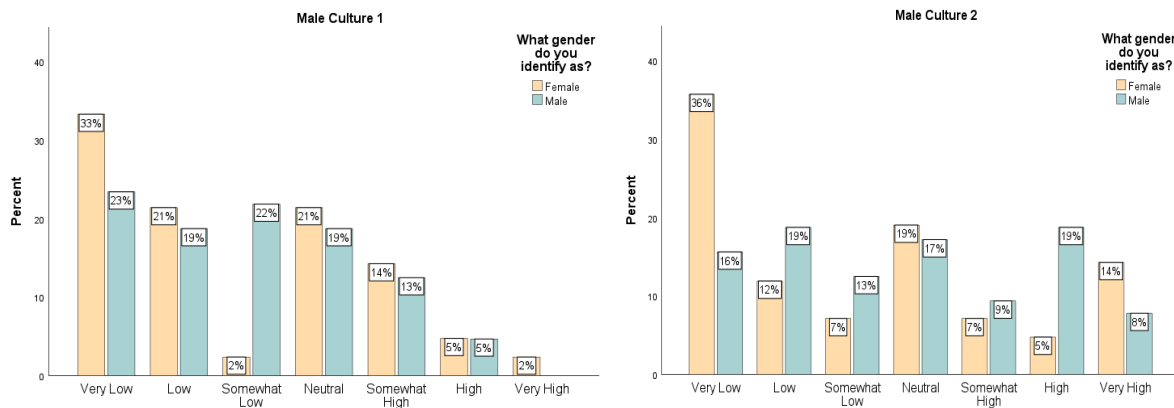


Figure 4:20: Male Culture 1 & Figure 4:21: Male Culture 2

The two items related to Male Culture display somewhat different results (see figure 4:20 and 4:21). For the first question regarding gender stereotypes, a majority chose the lower or neutral option, while only approximately 20% chose “Somewhat High” (14%) and “High” (5%). For the second question, the answers are more spread out. Interestingly, 36% of the female employees chose “Very Low” to the extent that people expect the top leaders to be men, while only 16% of the male employees chose that option. Furthermore, only 26% of the female employees chose the positive options, compared to the male employees, where 36% chose the positive options.

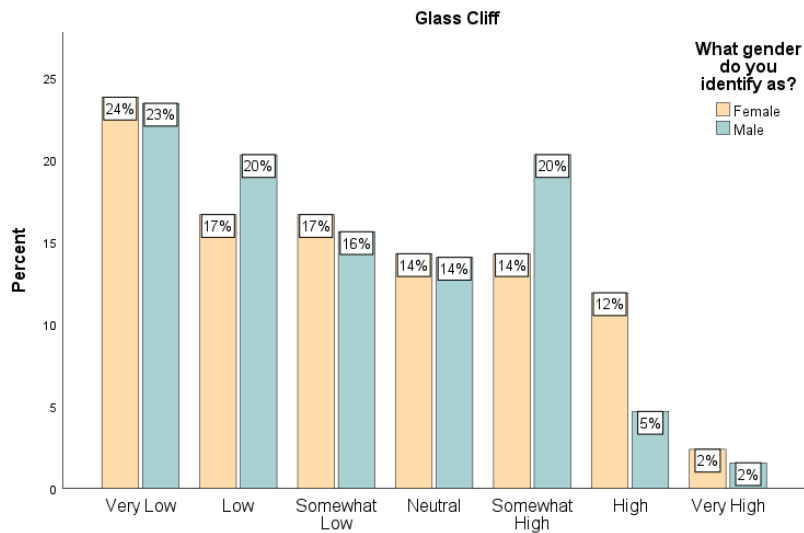


Figure 4:22: Glass Cliff

The results shown in figure 4:22 reveal that a majority of the employees have not, or rarely, been held responsible for organizational problems outside of their control. 20% of the male employees chose the option “Somewhat High”, indicating that it might happen, but not that often. This seems to happen a little bit more frequently for the female employees, with 12% choosing the option “High”.

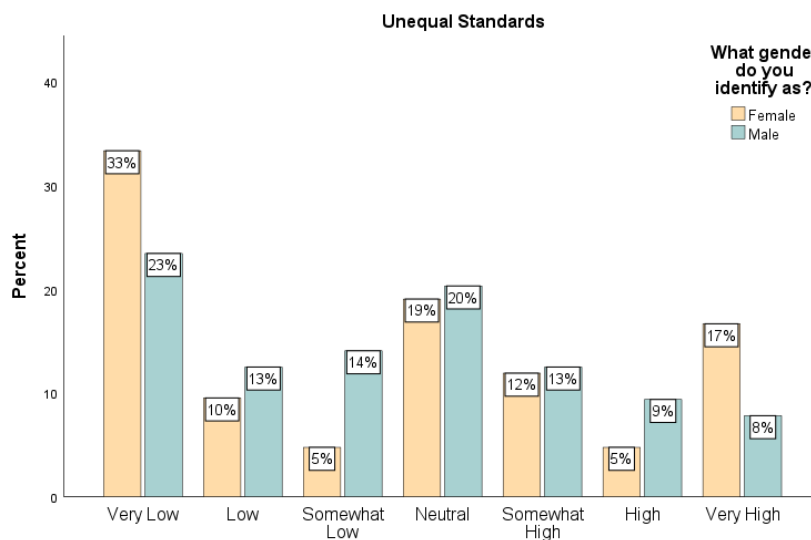


Figure 4:23: Unequal Standards

The results shown in figure 4:23 display that approximately 50% of the employees picked negative options in regards to the equal performance evaluation. For the male employees, approximately 30% chose the positive options in a decreasing amount from the option “Neutral”. For the female employees, 40% picked the positive options, with “Very High”

being the most selected one at 17%. That results in the female employees being a majority on both “Very Low” (33%) and “Very High” (17%), accounting for 50% of their total answers, indicating a polarization of their opinions.

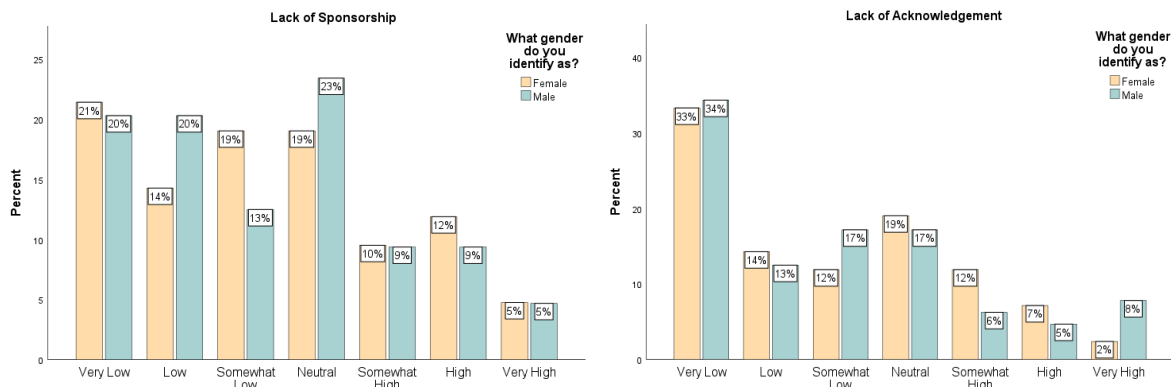


Figure 4:24: Lack of Sponsorship & Figure 4:25: Lack of Acknowledgement

The results from Lack of Sponsorship (see figure 4:24) reveal a majority of employees selecting the negative and neutral option, with only approximately 25% of the employees selecting the positive option, revealing that many managers are actively supporting their employees to become promoted. For Lack of Acknowledgement (see figure 4:25), the results show that a majority of the employees feel that they are supported at meetings, with only approximately 20% of the employees selecting the positive options.

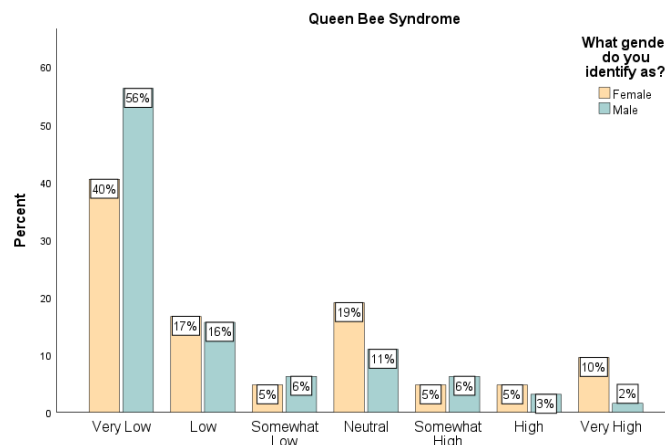


Figure 4:26: Queen Bee Syndrome

Women in higher positions do not seem to be that large of an issue (see figure 4:26). 56% of the male employees and 40% of the females chose “Very Low”, signaling a strong disagreement. Interestingly enough, 10% of the female employees selected “Very High”.

4.2.4 Summary of TM, CSM and GB

TM	CSM	GB	Male	Female	GB	CSM	TM
4.10	4.79	3.27	64	42	3.31	4.66	4.27

Table 4:4: Mean Index score

Table 4:4 reveals the index score for the different variables based on the gender of the respondent. Observing the numbers reveal no major differences between the genders or variables. For TM, the female employees had a better index score, indicating that the female employees feel more satisfied with the support received from the organization. For CSM, the male employees had a higher index score, indicating that they are more actively involved in their own career development. And for the variable concerning GB revealed that the female employees had a higher score, but not by much.

	TM	CSM	GB	Male	Female	GB	CSM	TM
Upper Levels	4.28	4.70	2.77	8	6	3.04	5.22	4.39
Middle Levels	4.28	4.74	3.41	11	4	2.89	4.62	4.12
Lower Levels	4.56	5.25	2.97	6	4	3.67	5.37	4.15
Unknown Levels	4.08	4.76	3.39	39	28	3.38	4.44	4.28

Table 4:5: Mean Index score with levels

The table seen above (see table 4:5) displays the different mean score of the different index variables based on the level and gender of the respondent. The score visible reveals similar scores amongst the two different genders. Interestingly, the male employees in the upper levels report the lowest mean score concerning gender bias. The highest mean score of gender bias is found in the lower levels amongst the female employees. The index variable concerning CSM displays a somewhat higher score for female employees in the upper levels, compared to the male employees in the upper levels. For TM, the mean scores between the genders are somewhat similar, except for the lower levels, where the male employees' scores result in a 4.56 and the female employees result in 4.15.

	TM	CSM	GB	Male	Female	GB	CSM	TM
18-34	4.19	5.29	3.08	14	10	2.98	5.31	4.97
35-44	4.20	4.57	3.17	20	11	3.76	4.62	4.62
45-54	4.23	4.84	3.38	19	13	3.24	4.80	4.07
55+	4.09	4.50	3.53	11	8	3.21	3.66	3.20

Table 4:6: Mean Index score with age

Table 4:6 gives us information about the index score based on the gender and the age of the employee. For TM, it gives us a clear indication that both the female and male employees feel less support from the organization with their increasing age. The gap is much higher amongst the female employees, ranging from 4.97 with 18-34 year olds, to 3.20 with 55+ years. For CSM, the highest score came from the 18-34 year olds for both the female and male employees, to then go down a bit with the 35-44 year olds. It then went up again with 45-54 year olds, to lastly go down to the lowest score with 55+ years. With the variable GB it is interesting to see that the female employees 18-34 has the lowest score, while then having the highest score during the ages 35-44. The highest score from the male employees came from those at 55+ years.

	TM	CSM	GB	Male	Female	GB	CSM	TM
<2 years	4.43	4.99	3.31	19	13	3.41	4.64	4.65
2-6 years	4.04	4.71	3.11	15	11	3.03	5.21	4.45
6+ years	4.11	4.72	3.33	30	18	3.40	4.34	3.88

Table 4:7: Mean Index score with duration of employment

Observing the different index scores based on the gender of the employee and the duration of their employment reveals some interesting results (see table 4:7). For TM, the results observed are that the longer the employees work, the less score the TM gets, with <2 years having the highest score, while 6+ years having the lowest. For the CSM, it starts above

neutral for the female employees, to then increase quite a bit, before the employees who have been employed 6+ years cause it to be the lowest amongst the results. For the male employees, it starts with its best results with the employees employed for <2 years. It then becomes above neutral for both 2-6 years and 6+ years. The variable GB is somewhat similar for both genders. It starts around 3.40, to decrease a bit, before it increases again to a score almost exactly similar to the first one. It seems that the GB decreases during a period for the employees after a couple of years, to then increase when they have passed 6 years.

4.2.5 Difference between the Gender of Manager

The data regarding the difference the gender of the employees manager had was one insight we found when observing our survey data. Thus, this insight was utilized to adapt our interview guide, providing us with a new direction. See appendix 1 for abbreviation of variables.

	TM	CSM	GB			GB	CSM	TM
Male Managers	4.09	4.74	3.22	Male	Female	2.94	4.94	4.37
Female Managers	4.94	5.23	3.73	Male	Female	4.12	4.10	3.95

Table 4:8: Mean Index Score related to Gender of Manager

When observing the data, one thing that stuck out was the difference found in what gender the manager of the employees were. Looking at the table 4:8 above, we can see the mean score on the index variables, by the different genders and based on the gender of their manager. Comparing the mean score reveals some interesting insights. For the female employees with a female manager, the mean score of TM was 3.95, while it was 4.94 for the male employees with a female manager. For CSM, the female employees with a female manager had a score of 4.10, while the male employees with a female manager had a score of 5.23. Similarly, observing the mean score of GB for the female employees, we can see that those with a male manager results in a score of 2.94, while those with a female manager results in a score of 4.12. There is evidently a difference depending on what gender the employee's manager has, and thus we will present a more detailed overview of the difference among the index variables.

Gender	Gender of Manager	OSD	PA1	PA2	CM	POS	HP	WLB	RM
Female	Female	4.2	4.0	3.5	3.2	3.7	4.5	4.7	3.8
	Male	4.0	4.2	4.2	4.6	4.4	4.2	4.7	4.3
Male	Female	4.7	4.8	5.1	5.4	5.4	3.7	5.0	5.2
	Male	3.8	3.9	3.8	3.8	4.1	4.9	4.3	3.8

Table 4:9: Variables in Talent Management related to Gender of Manager

Observing the mean score of the variables included in the Talent Management index variable, we can immediately see some interesting numbers related to the gender of the employee and the gender of the manager (see table 4:9). The highest average mean score (5.1) comes from the male employees with a female manager, while the female employees with a female manager have the lowest average mean score (3.7). Furthermore, the female employees with a male manager have a higher score on each variable compared to the male employees with a male manager. If we observe the three variables concerning Perceived Organizational Support, Career Mentoring and Role Models, we can observe that the female employees with female manager reported a score of under 4 on each of them, while the male employees with a female manager reported a score of above 5. Additionally, we can observe that the employees that have a manager of the same gender do report a lower score than those that have a manager of the opposite gender.

Gender	Gender of Manager	PCS	PCO	DUM	NB	SCG	SF
Female	Female	4.6	4.1	4.9	3.9	3.2	3.9
	Male	5.1	4.7	5.0	4.8	4.6	5.1
Male	Female	5.8	5.1	5.0	5.1	4.8	5.4
	Male	5.1	4.5	4.9	4.7	4.1	4.9

Table 4:10: Variables in Career Self-Management related to Gender of Manager

Similarly to Talent Management, the variables connected to the Career Self-Management display similar patterns concerning the difference the gender of the manager has (see table 4:10). Male employees with female managers have once again the highest average mean score (5.2), while female employees with female managers have the lowest (4.1). The employees with a manager that has the same gender as them have a lower average mean score compared to the employees with a manager of the opposite gender. Some of the highest differences can be visible in Networking Behavior, Sought Career Guidance and Self-Nomination, where the female employees with a female manager had a mean score of under 4, while the male employees with a female manager had almost all of them above 5. Interestingly, the variable Desire for Upward Mobility was very even across the different groups, but still, we can see that the amount of Career Self-Management the different groups participate in varies more than one could expect.

Gender	Gender of Manager	MC1	MC2	GC	US	LOS	LOA	QBS
Female	Female	3.9	4.4	3.7	4.8	4.8	4.0	3.3
	Male	2.3	2.7	2.9	3.0	4.7	2.3	2.4
Male	Female	3.0	4.8	2.7	4.8	4.8	3.4	2.4
	Male	2.9	3.5	3.1	3.2	4.7	2.6	2.1

Table 4:11: Variables in Gender Bias related to Gender of Manager

Observing the Gender Bias amongst the different groups reveal some interesting results. Compared to the index variables concerning Talent Management and Career Self-Management, the results in the table 4:11 above are much more varied. Interestingly, the female employees had the highest and lowest mean score, with the female employees with a female manager having the highest, while those with a male manager had the lowest. For the male employees, those with a male manager reported a lower mean score, while those with a female manager had a higher mean score, even higher than the female employees with a male manager. Observing the first item concerning Male Culture that investigated the pressure to conform to gender stereotypes revealed that female employees with female managers felt the most pressure, albeit with a mean score under 4, so still on the negative side. For the second

item regarding Male Culture that investigated how the people in the organization assumed that the top leaders will be men, there were similar scores amongst the female and male employees with female managers, compared to the female and male employees with male managers. For Unequal Standards, the variable concerning the amount of work women have to do to get the same performance evaluation as men, reported the same mean score for female and male employees with a female manager. The female and male employees with a male manager both reported a lower score, albeit almost the same mean score.

4.2.6 The Career Concept Model

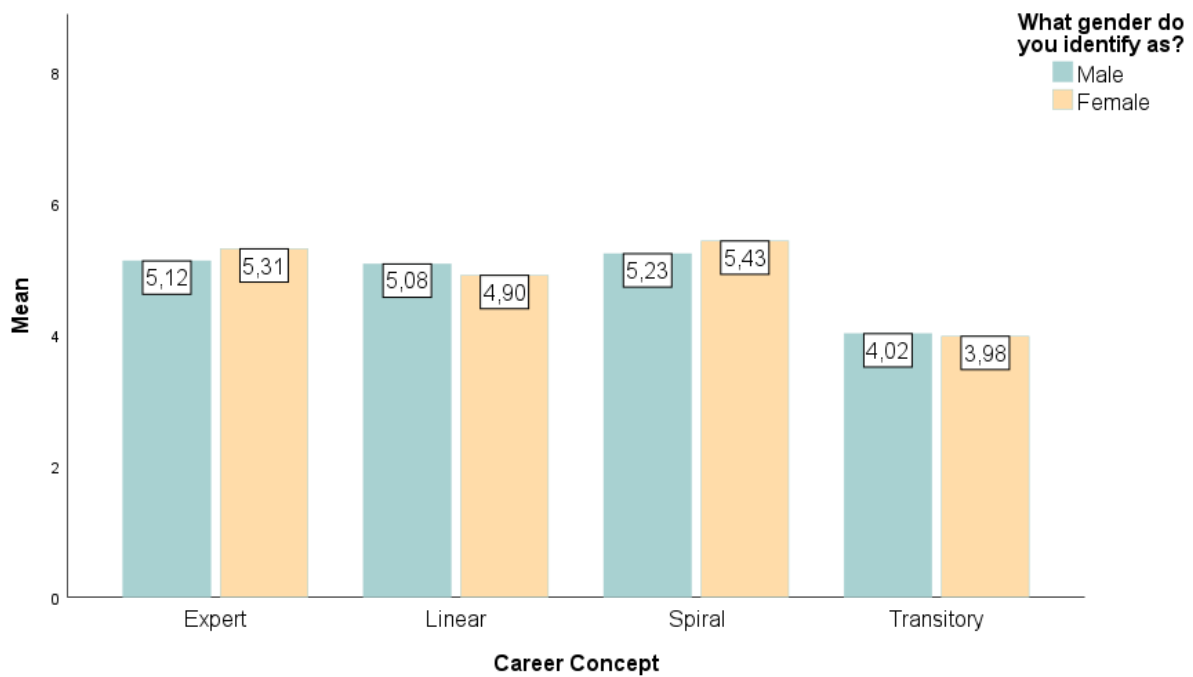


Figure 4:27: Mean Career Concept

The Mean Career Concept displays the mean score that our respondents received on the four different profiles (see figure 4:27). As we can observe, there is no major difference in the score across the male and female employees. The highest mean score for both male and female employees was Spiral, and the lowest score was for Transitory.

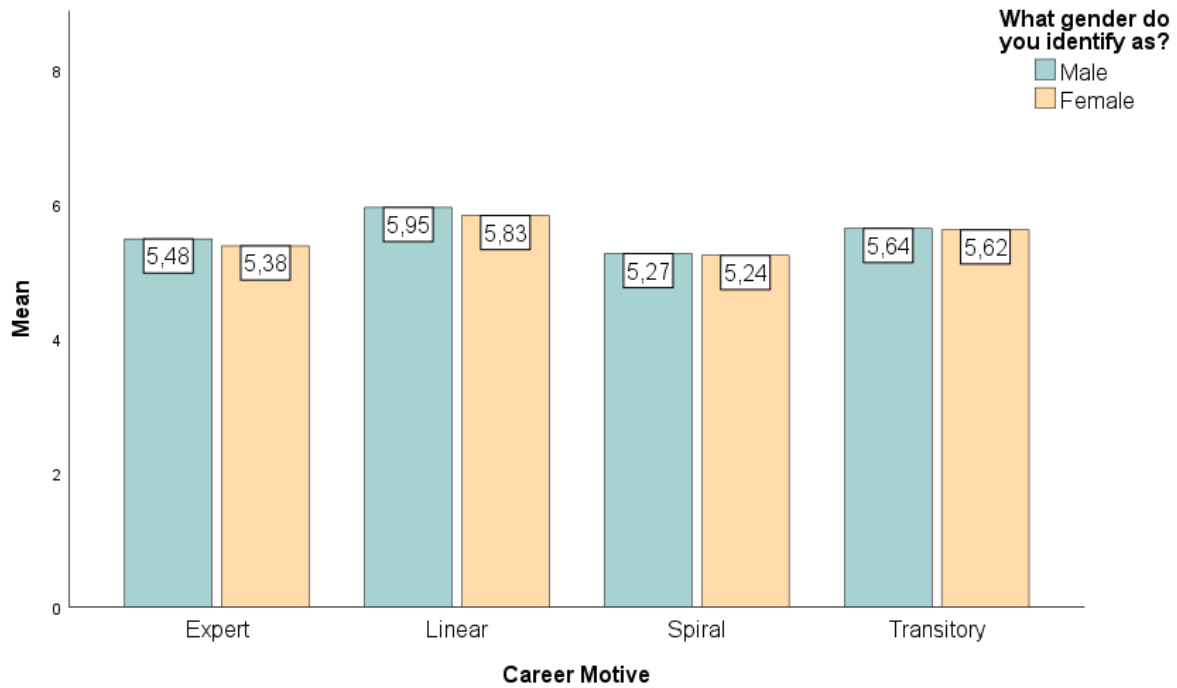


Figure 4:28: Mean Career Motives

The score is very similar amongst all the motives, but the motive with the highest mean score was Linear for both male and female employees (see figure 4:28). The lowest score is for Spiral, which interestingly was the highest found Career Concept.

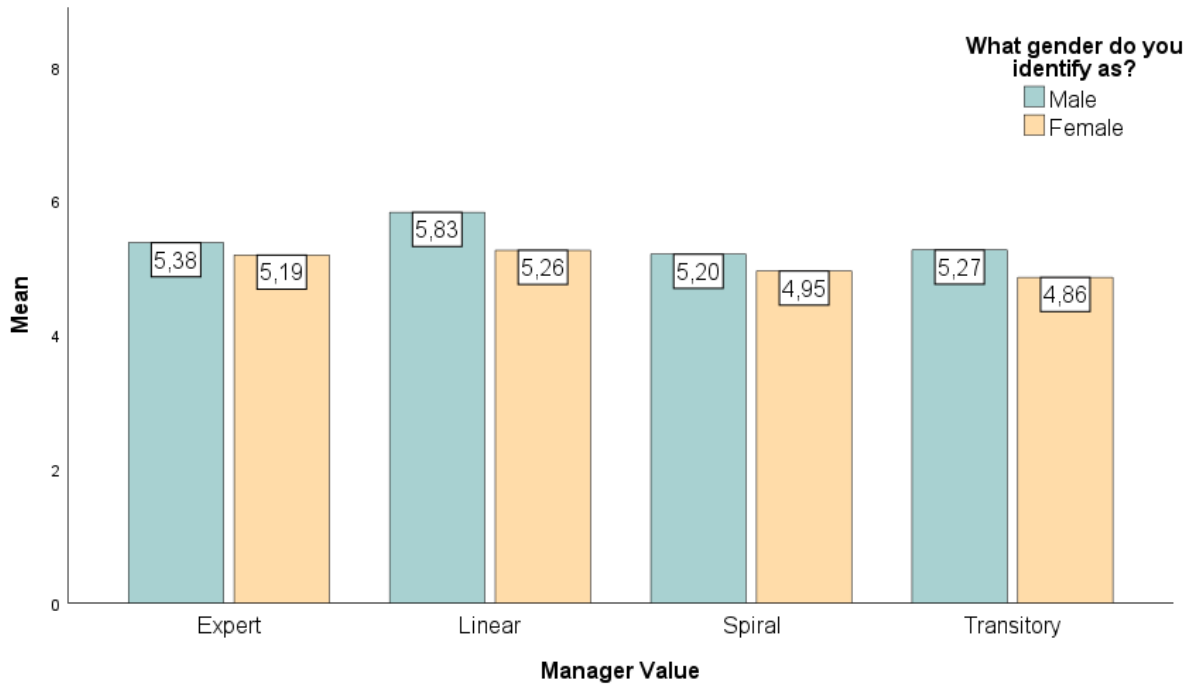


Figure 4:29: Mean Manager Value

For the Mean Manager Value, which refers to what the respondents believe their manager is focused on in the different aspects, we can observe that Linear was the highest profile for the female and male employees (see figure 4:29). The item regarding Linear was observing to what extent their manager valued high performance. The lowest score for the male employees was Spiral, which investigated to what extent the manager values creative teamwork. For the female employees it was Transitory that received the lowest score, which observed the extent that the employees felt that their manager values fast customer adaptation. Expert investigated to what extent their managers value long-term quality, which resulted in the second highest score for both male and female employees. Considering the nature of the employee evaluations in place at the organization, it does not come as a surprise that Linear, which refers to the performance, is the profile which received the highest score.

	Expert	Linear	Spiral	Transitory	Men	Women	Expert	Linear	Spiral	Transitory
Upper Levels	4.83	5.50	4.16	3.00	6	4	3.25	5.50	5.25	4.75
Middle Levels	5.11	4.88	5.44	4.33	9	4	5.00	5.50	5.50	3.50
Lower Levels + Non-Managers	5.50	5.33	5.33	4.00	6	4	5.25	5.00	4.75	4.50

Table 4:12: Mean Career Concept Across the levels

The table 4:12 above presents the Mean Career Concept amongst the managers in the different levels. For the lower levels, the employees there that are not managers are included as well, since the difference in levels is much smaller there than it would be in the middle or upper levels. It also allows us to have a more consistent base of managers to compare with. If we observe the male managers, the profile with the highest score changes across the levels, starting with Expert at the lower levels, to Spiral in the middle levels, to Linear in the upper levels. It is noticeable that Expert, Linear and Spiral have consistently high scores across the levels, while Transitory have consistently low scores across the levels. Since Transitory is related to a career where the person frequently changes to completely new job areas, it is evidently not something that is attractive to the male managers. This is since they rather strive for the specialization associated with Expert, or the hierarchical advancement associated with Linear. Since Spiral focuses on broadening the work experiences every 5-10 years to related areas, it can be interpreted as a less extreme version of Transitory, which can explain some popularity that Spiral received. For the female managers, we find that the same profiles received the highest scores across the levels as with the male managers. The difference here though is that it became a tie in the middle levels between Linear and Spiral. Transitory received somewhat higher scores for the female managers, but not enough to make it the highest in any level. Expert also saw a steep decrease in popularity amongst the upper levels, which can indicate a new desire for the managers to become less specialized and focus more broadly on their careers, which can be seen in the high scores that Spiral and Transitory received for the upper levels manager.

	Expert	Linear	Spiral	Transitory	Men	Women	Expert	Linear	Spiral	Transitory
Upper Levels	4.66	5.33	4.66	5.50	6	4	4.75	5.50	5.50	6.0
Middle Levels	5.00	6.11	5.11	5.55	9	4	5.00	6.50	4.25	5.25
Lower Levels + Non-Managers	6.50	6.50	6.00	6.33	6	4	5.00	5.75	5.75	5.75

Table 4:13: Mean Career Motives Across the levels

The Mean Career Motives display some interesting numbers (see table 4:13). For the male managers, the lower levels displayed somewhat similar scores, but Expert and Linear were the highest. Linear was the highest for the middle levels, where the scores were more varied. For the upper levels, Transitory received the highest score, with Linear almost having the

same score. For the female managers, we can observe that Linear, Spiral and Transitory all had the same score in the lower levels, and Expert had the lowest. For the middle levels, Linear has the highest score, and for the upper levels, Transitory had the highest score of the different Motives. Both male and female managers had Linear as the highest for lower and middle levels, and then Transitory as the highest at the upper levels, which reveals a similar motivation for both genders. Linear, which refers to the motivation to have a greater performance, have a consistently high score across the levels. This can be explained by the desire the employees have to perform well, since that is what they are evaluated on. Expert can be seen to be much less popular compared to the Career Concept. Spiral, which explores how much the managers are motivated by creativity, can be found to have the highest score at the lowest levels. Transitory saw a major increase in the scores compared to the Career Concept. It explores the motivation the managers have for variety, which seems to be an important motivational factor for most of the managers.

	Expert	Linear	Spiral	Transitory	Men	Women	Expert	Linear	Spiral	Transitory
Upper Levels	5.66	5.16	5.33	4.66	6	4	5.50	6.00	6.50	5.00
Middle Levels	5.55	6.00	4.88	5.55	9	4	5.25	4.75	5.25	4.50
Lower Levels + Non-Managers	5.83	6.33	5.66	4.50	6	4	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.75

Table 4:14: Mean Manager Values Across the levels

For the Mean Manager Values, we can observe a difference between the male and female managers (see table 4:14). For the male managers, Linear has the highest score for the male managers at the lower and middle levels. For the upper levels, Expert was the profile with the highest score. For the female managers, Transitory was the profile with the score amongst the lower levels. For the middle levels, both Expert and Spiral had the highest score. Spiral continued to have the highest score for the male managers at the upper levels. Comparing the two genders, we can observe that while Linear and Expert were the profiles most popular amongst the male managers, Expert, Spiral and Transitory were the most popular choices for the female employees. It makes it apparent that the male managers have managers that value long-term quality and high performance, while the female managers have managers that value creative teamwork and fast customer adaptation.

	Expert	Linear	Spiral	Transitory	Male	Female	Expert	Linear	Spiral	Transitory
Male Managers	5.42	5.78	5.08	5.31	57	29	5.44	5.48	5.20	5.00
Female Managers	5.00	6.14	6.14	4.85	7	10	4.70	4.90	4.80	4.50

Table 4:15: Mean Manager Values relative to the Gender of the Manager

The table 4:15 above displays the mean Manager Values based on the gender of the employees manager. The data observing the mean Career Concept and Motives reveal no differences, so they will not be displayed, so we will focus on this table above instead. For the male employees, there was no major difference in the score whether their manager was a male or female. The only major difference was seen in the Spiral profile, where the male employees with a female manager increased it from 5.08 to 6.14. For the female employees, the score with a male manager is similar to the score the male employees had with a male manager. The interesting difference can be found in the female employees' response with a female manager, where they lower the score on all four profiles, and reveal the lowest score overall.

	Motives Manager Value Fit	Male	Female	Motives Manager Value Fit
Male Managers	8.3	57	29	7.9
Female Managers	9.2	7	10	8.9

Table 4:16: Motives Manager Value Fit

When we compare the male and female employees' motivational fit with their respective male and female manager values in table 4:16 above, we can see that the highest average fit is between the male employees and the female manager (9.2). The second highest is from the female employees with a female manager (8.9). The two lowest average is from a male employee with a male manager (8.3), and the lowest average is between the female employees with a male manager (7.9).

4.3 Descriptive Analysis of Interview Data

As mentioned in chapter 3.5.2 Qualitative Data, the interviews have been coded using the Framework presented. Here we will present our analysis of the findings, divided between the

most prominent themes found from the six interviews conducted. The table of interviewees is presented in 3.4 Sampling (see table 3:3). There were eight themes used for analysis, these were then merged to create six main themes which will be presented below.

4.3.1 Perception of Manager

A central theme in the survey, which therefore was added as a question in the interview guide, see Appendix 2, was the effect the manager had on the employees career development and their perception of gender biases. Question 12 in the interview guide focused on the relationship between the interviewee and their manager. Here we will present the answers and results.

All the interviewees expressed their satisfaction with their manager and it became evident that the relationship with the manager is important for their career advancement. Their managers clearly support them in their participation in career development programs and training, including mentorship. All of the interviewees revealed that they appreciated their manager and that they had a good and supportive relationship where the manager was available for them when needed. **Interviewee 6** expressed that her manager gave her freedom under responsibility. Moreover, in regards to the relationship with their manager, **Interviewee 5** described:

“I think it's very direct and transparent to be honest. So he's French, strangely enough, but he's very Swedish leadership style. So it's much more involving. It's also a lot about consensus as well and he gives me quite a lot of space to really, you know, deliver what I want to do and. And I think my way of working with him is really positive”.

In other words, she believes that her manager's leadership style is involved and that he is giving her the opportunity to drive her own initiatives. **Interviewee 2** mentioned that she also appreciated her manager for being supportive and that he is available for her so that she can ask questions, which is important for her. **Interviewee 1** also said that their relationship is informal and transparent, which he appreciates. **Interviewee 3** said this about her relationship with her manager *“I'd probably say that relationship is very good and there's a lot of... let's say that there's, there's a lot of scope for me to, you know, move upward if I wanted to”.* We

can conclude that she therefore also acknowledges that her manager plays an important role in her career development.

Interviewee 2 also expressed regarding the culture and her perception of her manager that it is *“very important to have this kind of environment, to be self confident and continue to and not to have to hide things because you are afraid that somebody see”*. She highlights the importance of a supportive environment where you can admit when you are wrong or have made a mistake, and she thinks that the organization and her manager really support that.

In summary, the managers have a significant effect on the career development of the employees, according to the interviews. Another aspect that can affect the leadership and therefore the career development opportunities is organizational culture, leading us to the next theme.

4.3.2 Organizational Culture

Another aspect that was detected during the interviews was organizational culture. Question 4 in the interview guide focused on organizational culture and values.

Interviewee 6 highlighted the very supportive culture, where you could ask anyone for help. Also both **Interviewee 1** and **Interviewee 3** mentioned that the organization is very decentralized. Furthermore, the Swedish culture is affecting the culture and leadership within the organization, which is mentioned by **Interviewee 1** *“I don't know if that's a Swedish way or that's just the [Organization] way”*, meaning that it is either the culture of the company or the country in which the company was founded that affects it. Also mentioned by **Interviewee 1** and **Interviewee 6** were that the organization is global, which opens up for possibilities to change countries to work in. **Interviewee 1** said that *“we bring people in, we invest in them and teach them and then they move on within the company to other opportunities”*, further he also mentioned that this move could mean moving from different countries. An example of this is **Interviewee 5** that have moved countries in connection with changing roles. She also experienced cultural differences when doing this *“the leadership differences, like what people expect from the leaders are different from people in [Country] and also people in Sweden or in any other countries”*. This shows that the Swedish culture has an effect on the organization and the leadership, as expressed in the quote above.

Interviewee 5 mentioned that she thinks that the culture is very entrepreneurial. She also said that *“I think [Organization] really stands for its entrepreneurial spirit and I also think Swedish culture plays a big part. I would normally describe it's a little bit of a mix of Swedish and American culture”* she continues saying:

“American culture is more like it's still very result oriented, you know, and the good people, they say the high performers still get to recognise and they get rewards, but then they're very Swedish in a way. You know, it is still very caring and they're really taking care of the employees. As far as the leadership that I've experienced so far it is like this”.

She, in other words, clarifies that the organization is influenced by both the American and the Swedish company culture, being result oriented but also caring of the employees.

Interviewee 3 said that she felt that the company culture is strong and that since it is a very global company the culture is something that unites people *“if you don't have a uniform take on company culture, it would be very difficult to bring people so different from such diverse backgrounds working in such different locations”*. This is also confirmed by **Interviewee 1** that expressed concerning the core values that *“There's been a lot of intentional work around that”* and *“I would say that the core values of the company are very strong”*. In that global spirit, **Interviewee 2** expressed that she thinks that *“I don't think we really make a difference between foreign people or not foreign people”*.

Interviewee 2 said that she does not appreciate when the company culture is driven from the top. However, **Interviewee 3** mentioned that she instead appreciated that the organization had driven these diversity issues and that *“there's a very strong diversity agenda we have to, you know, highlight people in different roles, how they're contributing to the company, to the company culture. I like the fact that it has been driven from the top”*.

Interviewee 5 also mentioned that the culture in the organization is very engineering focused and that even the salespeople need to have an engineering background, which she believes could be a hinder for gender diversity within these roles as well, since there are fewer women with an engineer background.

To summarize, the Swedish culture is prominent in the organization and affects the managers and the career development opportunities. Also, it is clear that the global spread of the organization affects the culture, making it more inclusive and strong, as well as the career development opportunities.

4.3.3 Mentorship, Role Models and Networking

Another aspect that was central in the interviews was mentorship and role models, as this became evident to be important in the survey results. The third theme in the interview guide was concerning mentors, role models and networking.

Interviewee 6 explained that employees themselves sign up for the mentorship programme and they potentially get matched with a mentor. Both **Interviewee 4** and **Interviewee 5** mentioned the importance of role models and especially having female role models, being women themselves. **Interviewee 5** mentioned that:

“I felt some female leaders were acting more like men” and she continued by saying that *“I think I would like to have a positive role model. Yeah. So then I can understand how she managed different kinds of difficulties or obstacles in that working environment”* and she finished by saying that *“I also observed still continuously that our male colleagues sometimes really... No, I wouldn't say ignore, but they take what female colleagues say more lightly, they say they care less”*. She indicated that for her a female mentor would help her navigate these types of situations that occur in her daily working life.

This is confirmed by **Interviewee 4** that mentioned that *“I do have mentors, and if I go for a mentor, I do typically try to pick up a woman because I've got so many men around me anyway”*. **Interviewee 4** also talked about the process of her gaining a mentor, *“when I started speaking to her, she actually asked me to be my mentor. It wasn't that other way round. She said to me, “I would like to mentor you.”* Furthermore, she said that her mentor is helping and supporting her in standing up for herself as well as pushing her. She perceives her mentor as both a big cheerleader and a big sister. She mentions that her mentor has helped her navigate the different perceptions that men and women receive, such as *“But when I'm surrounded by men, I'm obviously going to look a lot more emotional than anyone else”*. She

also feels like the relationship has gone from mentor and mentee to them both learning and helping each other.

However, **Interviewee 3** stated that she thinks mentors are important but that *“it doesn't have to be like if that's a woman, that is great, but I don't have a preference on that front, can be a man”*. Also **Interviewee 6** said that she does not think that the mentor has to be the same gender as the mentee, but instead argued that it could be good to have a mentor with a different gender because they might think differently. **Interviewee 2** mentioned that she does not have any formal mentor but that she perceives her manager as her mentor.

Interviewee 1 also mentioned the importance of mentors and said that they hired an external mentor to work with one of the female talents in the organization *“Just an example of where we're going outside of the company because we don't have a lot of female leaders that are available”*. **Interviewee 1** expressed that because of the lack of female managers in senior positions, they did not have any mentors for the younger females, he therefore initiated having an external mentor.

Interviewee 6 had herself been a mentor and she highlighted that it had been a good experience, and great to share and help someone else to develop and see opportunities and to listen and ask the right questions.

Interviewee 3 highlighted the need for a mentorship program in the organization for the managers in the more senior positions, she believed that they are good at developing younger employees but when you become more senior it is mainly about succession planning and having conversations about career advancement and goals. She experiences that when you reach a higher managerial level there are not that many programs, and the programs that are available are more about developing specific skills. She also mentioned that there is a program that is very self driven where you have to *“take ownership of your own career development”*. She said that she would benefit from the organization having a more balanced approach, *“I think we would benefit from balancing out the whole self driven approach and top down approach”* and that the organization should give more support to senior people in their career progression:

“But I think where we need a bit more conversations (...) we're such a big massive decentralized organization, are there options for horizontal moves or are there other options to go to different geographically. OK, I feel I'm kind of stuck in my role, what do I do?”.

She thinks that conversations and communication between the department and business units in the organization would benefit the career development of the employees.

Interviewee 5 said that she participated in the mentoring programme and requested a female in a leadership role, which she was matched with. This mentor has since then left the organization but **Interviewee 5** tells us that they still keep in contact and catch up regularly.

When asking if he perceives any gender differences in seeking mentorship **Interviewee 1** answered:

“I think it's more generational right now. (...) Some of the older folks want to retain the status quo. And they're actually, it seems that they're less interested in coaching and mentoring and expanding. The younger generation really seems in my experience they really embrace it and want it”.

He highlighted the age difference in regards to mentorship and coaching, and that older employees are less interested in engaging in this, compared to younger employees.

In regards to role models, **Interviewee 3** thinks that they play a massive role, and that having examples is important:

“I'd say in terms of kind of future vision, it would be great to see role models, people who do something similar but that's probably the most important part, because obviously having conversations with your manager is important. It's great that people bring those things up, but equally a conversation is one story, but you always want to have an example of ok, this actually happened. There's people who do these things. There's people in those roles. I think that's quite important for you to see the possibility of progression or career development”.

She also highlighted that she does find it important that these role models are women, since she does not see that many women in the senior management roles in the organization.

Interviewee 4 discussed the female influencer, and that she had been asked to participate and that her male colleague told her: “*you're honestly like you're paving the way for, like, my daughter. My daughter now knows she can do whatever she wants to do because you've managed to do it*” and she mentioned that she understands that argument but that she does not see it in that way but “*I don't think I've ever really had idols around me either. Like I don't idolize people, I just see individuals shining for being themselves.*” she also said that: “*I understand where they're coming from, but they don't understand the pain and the amount of that I've had to go through to get to where I am (...) it doesn't really describe the full journey.*”

In other words, she contends that focusing solely on her career progression will not adequately show all the obstacles she had to overcome to reach her current position.

When asking about what the organization could do to improve the gender diversity within the organization, **Interviewee 4** mentioned that “*connecting or networking with other women would be good*”. She said that it can be very helpful to reach out to other women and when she did it was “*just a relief to be able to relate to something in a situation and so I guess it's maybe a connection or a community*” and she further mentions that “*I do think sometimes there's not maybe there's not that safe space*”. This is confirmed by **Interviewee 5** that said:

“it might be very good also to have like a female group. So which means I feel we all share similar difficulties. So it might be good, we share these difficulties and we learn from each other how we manage seeing these situations. So for example, when you get ignored by your male colleagues. Hmm, how do they voice out? How do they, you know, stay firm? What kind of line do they draw? I Think you know when I talk to many different female leaders, it's exactly the same topics that we are facing”.

She meant that having a group of women where they can share experiences would benefit her in defining solutions to common issues that she might face in her daily work.

To summarize this part, mentorship, role models and networking are essential for especially women in their career development, providing both support and advice. This might be especially important in a male dominated organization.

4.3.4 Career Development Programs and Trainings

The interviews reveal that the employees are generally positively disposed to the training and programs for career development offered by the organization. **Interviewee 6** mentioned all the training and programs available, and that these open up the opportunity to network with different people and develop your career. She said that one of the benefits of being a large global organization is that they can offer these programs and training. Furthermore, she mentioned online learning opportunities, such as e-learning, where the employees themselves can sign up to participate. On the questions asking if these opportunities differ between the countries, **Interviewee 1** mentioned that the resources are available in many different languages, but that it more depends on the local management. **Interviewee 1** said that *“I think the key is to have leaders that I believe in it and I want to encourage participation”*. Indicated by the interviewee is thus that the manager has a large impact on the participation in development training and programs by the employees.

This is partially confirmed by **Interviewee 5** that mentioned that: *“my boss at the time really tried to push me to grow really a lot, so I attended almost every leadership training that we had.”* She also said that *“it was good. I really appreciate that we have quite a lot of networking activity in my view and of course you know, but I still think really the big learning is still on the job (...) I try to apply what I have learned at the job. Then of course you know it depends on the situation and etcetera. So I still appreciate this training very much”*. Thus, she valued the trainings provided by the organization, which her manager promoted her to attend, but that her learning and development also happened on the job. Furthermore, **Interviewee 4** also mentioned that she learned on the job, but also through training, her perception of it was: *“Because of my age, they put me on the [Organizations] graduate programme. For me, life changing, not everyone will say that, but for me, it honestly was life changing”*.

The positive view of the programmes were confirmed by **Interviewee 1** that said *“I have participated in the leadership development program so it's for senior management, it was*

fantastic. It was about a year. We went all over the world, I learned and met a lot of great people, hired some people out of that". He therefore also had a very positive view on the training programs.

Interviewee 3 mentioned that she had participated in talent programs but that some of them are directed at more junior roles. Furthermore, **Interviewee 6** expressed that the opportunities for career development are great when you are younger, but that they are also working with this when you get older, there are programs for them as well but that more are focusing on more junior employees. The older can develop in other ways to develop their competencies and skills. There are opportunities if you have the motivation and will.

In summary, the general opinion on the career development training and programs offered by the organization is positively perceived. It is also evident that the managers promote participation.

4.3.5 Perception of Career Development Opportunities

Noted from the interviews was that **Interviewee 1**, **Interviewee 2**, **Interviewee 4**, **Interviewee 5** and **Interviewee 6** have had multiple roles within the organization and only **Interviewee 3** has had the same role since she started. All the interviewees expressed that they see many career development opportunities within the organization.

Interviewee 4 mentioned that she was not feeling fulfilled in her role but that she did not know what the next move was, so therefore she could not ask for it. However, she then mentioned that her mentor had pushed her to take on another role, she thought that it was a big jump but now she is really satisfied and happy with her new role. As mentioned above, **Interviewee 3** said that *"there's a lot of scope for me to, you know, move upward if I wanted to"* and further she mentioned that *"I'd say there's an active, there's a program in place where we have to do career succession planning and we have to kind of identify where we want to be, you know, in a few years time"*. She means that it is more about what you want to do and that she has not experienced that being a woman has impacted her career prospects.

Interviewee 2 explains her career advancement within the organization and highlights that *"I don't think it was because I was a woman that they gave me the seat but because I had the*

knowledge...” and “every year from my starting at [Organization] I have a promotion”. But she also highlighted that for her it was important to gain confidence before taking on a more senior role in the organization.

Interviewee 5 said that the career development opportunities existed but that “*I don't really think you can expect yourself to always grow vertically*” and that she felt like the opportunities for horizontal career development were lacking. Further, she mentioned that “*I just feel like this could be a potential barrier that we have in the company just like we are not so encouraged to let you try another field of opportunity*”. and she also said that “*the more years that I put in my time in [Area of work] or you know, like change now it feels more difficult to shift the career path*”. However, this perception is not shared with Interviewee 6, who mentioned the opportunities for employees to change country of work and BU. But you need to initiate it yourself. She said that if you feel the need to develop upward, there are not that many steps, but that you can develop horizontally.

Regarding the promotion process, **Interviewee 5** also said that her manager played an important part “*I started to tell my manager (...) I feel a little bit bored, you know, I want to change. I wanted to get promoted, you know, to do something a bit more challenging. And then he always supported me*”. Explaining the promotion process **Interviewee 1** said that “*we try to identify high flyers and high potential high performers and then make sure we have a path for those people*”. **Interviewee 6** also mentioned that the process included a discussion between the management team to identify talents and positions without a successor, to find opportunities. Moreover, she highlighted that the dialog between the employee and the manager is a great way of taking responsibility for your own career development and discussing potential opportunities.

In the interviews, it also became prominent that the problem with the lack of diversity also starts already in recruitment, and also even earlier when women apply for different programs in school, college and university.

Interviewee 6 said that she believes the problem is regarding finding qualified women that want to work in the organization, and therefore working with Employer Branding is crucial. **Interviewee 1** also explained that they have been fortunate in attracting and hiring women when sending younger and diverse employees to do campus recruiting. He mentioned that it

has been effective to start the conversation and said that once they learn about the organization they become interested very quickly. **Interviewee 6** also said that they try to hire for the long term, therefore the opportunities for career development are important. She further mentioned that they always post the job ads internally, to promote internal mobility and that they use a system for running job ads and potentially changing certain words so that the ad will be attractive to everyone, including women.

In regard to diversity in recruitment, **Interviewee 3** clarified that:

“obviously if you're one competing versus nine others, there's a high chance you know some people are better suited for promotion, so it kind of reinforces the loop, I'd probably say, where we are lacking I think is where we're lacking in terms of trying to get some more diversity is putting a very strong focus on hiring”.

Interviewee 1 mentioned regarding one recruitment process that *“Females applied and they were the best candidates. It was not that we gave them preference over a better candidate”.*

Interviewee 5 also had the same experience, *“It's actually quite funny and quite easy, because when I do the recruitment, the really capable candidates, most of them are female”* but she also mentioned that people had questioned her and saying that she only had hired women, but she highlighted that it was the most qualified candidate. They also mentioned that HR in that country was concerned about hiring young women since they might become pregnant and then they will not come back or come back but working part-time. But then **Interviewee 5** also mentioned that this was not an issue for herself personally since she got promoted while pregnant.

Interviewee 4 explain her hiring process where the decision where between her, a young woman, and an older man, and she said that *“they actually chose me and wanted something they wanted to mix up the dynamics within the workforce because a lot of the engineers have been there, twenty plus years, they're all very similar in age in the sense so”.*

Interviewee 3 was also saying that she thinks that women are being promoted quite well in her BU, and that they have quite a few women in senior positions, but mainly in legal and finance *“maybe that's a bit more kind of women driven kind of commercial roles less I'd say on the engineering side, less on the business management side”.* Furthermore, she said

regarding women that *“there are opportunities for promotion, but I guess... I guess what we're lacking is, we don't have enough of them”*.

Interviewee 2 mentioned that she thinks that it will take time to become completely gender diverse. She further mentioned that she thinks that there might be too much focus on gender, and should instead just be about the skills. She also mentioned that a diverse team with both men and women is the best. However, she also said that *“of course sometimes for inclusion you maybe we have to push a bit to change a bit”*.

In general, the interviewees expressed the perception of many career development opportunities within the organization, however, the issue is the lack of women in the organization.

4.3.6 Barriers for Gender Diversity

Interviewee 4 recognized that *“you only have to walk around our office in [City] and you'll realize we're not diverse, but we love to say we are”*.

In regard to what the organization can further do to promote gender diversity, **Interviewee 1** also mentioned that it is traditionally a very male dominated industry and that *“I think we're intentionally trying to create opportunities once females are in the organization to give them opportunities. Clearly, we're male dominated”*. He further acknowledged that *“I don't know how much of it is that we're an industrial company versus something more interesting like, Google or you know it's different. It's a different kind of, and it's chemical engineering typically or industrial engineering. And so you already have somewhat of a limited pool of female applicants”*. This was also mentioned when speaking of the lack of gender diversity, **Interviewee 5** mentioned *“I think, especially in this kind of traditional manufacturing or engineering company, it's quite common”*. Also **Interviewee 6** mentioned that both the industry and it being male dominated made it harder to attract women.

When asking about potential barriers for women in the organization, **Interviewee 1** answered *“I don't see any roadblocks if you're a female in an organization, I really don't. I would be disappointed if there were”*. But he further also emphasized that the manager plays a huge role in promoting development opportunities and participation in training and programs. He

mentioned that before, some managers that did not want to lose their talents would not give them opportunities and highlighted that it is not the way he manages. He mentioned that he:

“Always try to hire the smartest people, and then give them opportunities and if they leave that's that, because they need to do what's right for them. But I found that managers that really, truly, sincerely care about the person then their performance is better and their loyalty is better and they stay with the company longer“.

When actually changing roles within the organization **Interviewee 4** and **Interviewee 5** mentioned experiencing some difficulties. **Interviewee 4** also said that when she changed roles her former colleagues stopped talking to her and she felt that they were quite bitter and cold towards her. Her looking back at it:

“I just feel like they were grieving me. And for me, I now look back. It was very hard, it was a very hard time, I had nowhere to sit. Wherever I sat, it wasn't the right place. (...) I am still really good friends with them now and I would say I think that will continue with my new team as well”.

Interviewee 5 described her experience *“I don't feel being promoted was an issue. I feel being recognised or respected by the people afterwards is an issue”*. She experienced cultural differences of being respected when she was in a younger age, when moving from Sweden to another country and being in a higher managerial role she said that *“then there's also one of the challenges at the beginning, you know, how do you actually persuade them? And so that's why I think having a mentor at that time really helped me a lot”*. This is another example of when a mentor has helped and supported in challenging situations.

Further, regarding challenges facing women, **Interviewee 2** mentioned that the aspect of taking maternity leave could be a potential hindrance. She mentioned that *“I don't know how to explain that somebody on the board is working less time”*. She also said that this is even harder for men, asking to take the time off to spend with your children. She also mentioned that this is a cultural aspect and that it is different in Sweden. She said that this could be a good way of attracting people, since it is hard to find good people, this is a way of offering more.

Interviewee 3 mentioned that she did not experience gender or culture as a hinder, however age had been a hinder for her. She said that when she was younger, she was not being taken as seriously. She further said that *“I think the hard part is interacting with people who are more senior to you in age because they kind of look at you and, you know, you're their children's age. And you tell them how to do stuff”* and she said that *“You have to just remember not to second guess yourself”*. The age aspect was also mentioned by **Interviewee 4**, that when speaking of challenges, mentioned *“Not just like my gender though it's my age as well, it's like a combination of things”*. She further mentioned that it is harder when it is a combination, because then you don't know which one and then you can't tackle it, she said that:

“if you know what they're addressing, it's easier to address it, cause you can be like, 'and why would you say that?' like you can target the comment, but when it's a combination or it's a complex situation, you then doubt yourself because you're like, well, I don't know if it is my age, I don't know if my gender, I don't know if it's my knowledge, but you just feel disrespected and a little degraded in a sense like you have to keep building back up”.

Furthermore, when describing her role **Interviewee 4** said that:

“It's a lot of coordinating people, but that doesn't directly report to me, but at the same time, they've got to have enough respect for me to be able to, otherwise they're not going to do the work”.

Interviewee 4 also said that she thinks that men and women might be held to different standards at times:

“You could have a male that is probably just as emotional as I am in some sense just didn't happen to be the case in my department, but it doesn't mean he's any less worthy or he's less strong than I am. You all have different skills and abilities, and when you actually learn to identify those skills and abilities and apply them in the right situation, that's when you have the strongest team”.

She also feels that when people refer to her team as men and ladies it “*makes me feel isolated or excluded because I feel like they then just purposely identify the thing that's different about me and then I'm not included in the group*”. Moreover, she also expressed that:

“my passion as a woman was coming through as a lack of emotional intelligence, not what drives me to do my daily job. Because men, men and women show passion very differently, and we also show emotional intelligence very differently”.

Interviewee 3 mentioned that she thinks that the organization is working really well to promote the gender diversity with different initiatives and that they are taking these issues seriously, she said that “*what I like about it is I think the [Organization] recognized ok we need to do something around diversity, doing a blanket training and saying we have a policy will not do it*”. She further says that she thinks many managers use the argument such as “*Yes, you know we'd love to hire more women, would love to hire a more diverse workforce. However, you know it's engineering roles and there's less women interested*” and she said that some clear targets for gender diversity and inclusion would be beneficial, especially in the recruitment and hiring. Furthermore, she said that many managers are saying regarding women that there are not enough qualified women but she recognises that this becomes a “*self reinforcing loop*”. However, **Interviewee 6** mentioned the target of having 30% women in leading positions.

To summarize, gender bias can affect the career development opportunities. However, it was made evident that it was not only gender but also age that can affect the opportunity for women to get heard and respected.

5. Discussion

In this chapter we will present a discussion of the results from the secondary data, survey data and interview data, as presented in chapter 4. Results and Analysis. These will also be related to the theories presented in chapter 2. Theoretical Framework. The analysis will be done in accordance with our analytical framework, where we will explore the relationships between our main concepts, and in addition to this, answer the hypothesis.

5.1 Talent Management

Talent Management is the process the organization undergoes when they attract, retain and develop their employees (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). This process has the goal of strengthening the workforce, and developing talents that can contribute to the increasing success of the organization. If the talent management within the organization is flawed, it can have a major effect on the organizational performance and create an environment where the high-performing employees of the organization leave to pursue better opportunities elsewhere (Kraimer et al., 2011).

5.1.1 Talent Management and Career Development

When consulting the secondary data, it is obvious that the organization has many initiatives to develop and retain their high performers and talents. They have a succession planning program, where they identify using performance evaluation their high potentials (employees who are performing well). Those that receive the highest potential will be promoted within 2 years (From interview with HR representatives, 14-03-2023). The organization has different programs, such as leadership training, talent program and mentorship program. Most of the employees we interviewed had done training programmes, with Interviewee 4 saying “*They put me on the [Organizations] graduate programme. For me, life changing...*”. They had a positive perception regarding the support and training they had received from the organization, which can be seen in the survey response where the employees had a generally positive opinion on the support they have received from the organization and the opportunities for development that exist. This is reflected in the overall mean score of Talent Management across the different levels (see table 4:4), which was above neutral for both the female and male employees. Perceived organizational support can include access to professional development opportunities, mentoring programs, and career advancement

resources according to Kraimer et al., (2011). Furthermore, in accordance with Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa (1986) employees that feel supported by their organization, are more likely to experience higher levels of job satisfaction, commitment, and performance.

Further, the interviewees expressed perceived support from their managers, mentioning that their managers actively got them to participate in different training sessions and development programs. This can be due to the decentralized culture that the organization has, which Interviewee 1 mentioned has affected the way the leaders act.

This can be connected to succession planning, since it involves that the managers of the employees nominate them to other positions within the organization. It is therefore their responsibility to make sure that the employee receives the training necessary to become ready to overtake the respective manager should they leave or relocate within the organization.

It becomes clear that the organization and the managers affect the way that the employees are motivated and what they want to achieve in their careers. The performance evaluations and striving for success requires a high performance to become noticeable, so that the employees can become noticed as a high potential. This can be seen in the Mean Career Motive, where Linear was the most common found, indicating a drive to achieve consistently high performances. Considering that most employees think, observing the Mean Manager Value, that their managers value high performance the most, makes it more clear as to why it is such a popular motivational profile. When both the organization and the managers are valuing and rewarding high performance from the employees, it is not such a surprise to find it as the most common motivation amongst the employees.

Furthermore, it was clear that the Swedish culture is prominent in the organization and the interviewees expressed that it affected both the decentralized structure and the managers. Although, one interviewee still experienced significant cultural differences when moving from Sweden to another country, but continuing working for the organization.

5.1.2 Talent Management and the Gender Diversity in the Leadership

Pipeline

As mentioned, the organization has a mentorship programme in place where the employees can sign up to be a mentee or a mentor. The mentorship programme is part of the organization's activities to develop their employees. Letting your employees have mentors is a good way to promote gender diversity, and allows for the employees in need to receive advice and guidance on how to develop and succeed in their career (Ragins et al., 2000; Ibarra et al., 2010; Forret & Dougherty, 2004). During the interviews, the employees displayed a positive opinion regarding the mentorship programme at the organization. For the female employees we interviewed, all of them mentioned that they felt that having a mentor was important for them. Two female interviewees said that the gender of the mentor did not matter, but for the others a female mentor allowed them to ask for advice on issues related to their gender. One aspect mentioned was that when the workplace is lacking in diversity, there was also a lack in female colleagues to talk to. Therefore, the mentorship programme became a vital aspect in their career development, and one of the female employees interviewed expressed that they still had contact with their mentor, even after that person had left their position at the organization.

Another aspect mentioned was the fact that due to the lower number of female managers in the leadership pipeline, there are not enough female managers that are available to be mentors. Interviewee 1 mentioned that since there was no mentor available, they hired an external mentor for his employee, just so that they could ensure her continuous development. This displays the commitment some of the managers have to develop their employees, and highlights the unfortunate reality where there is not enough diversity within the leadership pipeline to fully support the mentorship programme for the employees at the lower levels.

The support the managers show their subordinates is not fully reflected in the survey data. Within the variable Career Mentoring found in figure 4:8, we can observe the wide variety of scores that the variable got, and wonder why the employees feel that the support is unequal. When observing the difference the employees felt due to the gender of their manager, found in table 4:9, further evidence can be found. The female employees with male managers, that all of our female interviewees had, presented a score of 4.6 for Career Mentoring. The employees with the same gendered managers gave the lowest score for Career Mentoring,

which can come as a bit surprising. If the male employees with a male manager got treated differently due to the impact the gender diversity activities have, you would expect the female employees to report a much higher score for Career Mentoring. But as it is now, only female employees with male managers report a high score, while the female employees with a female manager instead report the lowest score of them all. This tells us that these employees do not feel support from their manager at all, which could be connected to the Queen Bee Syndrome. The Queen Bee Syndrome indicates that the female manager in higher positions creates barriers for the female employees' own personal career advancement (Ellemers et al., 2012). One interviewee said that there was a tendency that the higher position female managers acted like men, or instead acted mean. This can be connected to the “think manager, think male” concept, where we expect top managers to be men, and unconsciously act like men due to that (Schein, 2001). Investigating the variable Queen Bee Syndrome (see figure 4:26) reveals a strong opinion that most of the employees do not think that higher manager females have ever been a problem for them, but a small minority of the female employees chose very high (10%). This could indicate that there might be some employees that have been affected by a higher female manager and feel that it is serious or personal enough to have such a strong opinion about it.

Two of the interviewees mentioned that having a female mentor is important for them, as this mentor can act as a role model. They experience that this mentor can be someone to talk to about the difficulties they are facing, regarding both career development and gender bias issues. However, these role models can be hard to find internally since the historically low participation of women in the labor market means they have relatively fewer role models to look towards across all industries (World Economic Forum, 2016). Some interviewees want to see a sort of forum where they can use this space to talk with other women about similar issues. This is confirmed by research that states that networking can be particularly beneficial for women, who often face limited access to influential networks due to gender-based social segregation and exclusion from informal "old boys' clubs" (Ibarra, 1992). Women can enhance their professional connections, access valuable resources, and improve their prospects for career advancement by actively participating in networking (Ibarra et al., 2010). But as mentioned before, women tend to have access to mentorship, however they also tend to be over-mentored and under-sponsored compared to men. This can in turn hinder their career progress. In this organization, the issue of the lack of influential women in senior

positions might impact the possibility for other women to be provided a mentor that can help develop their career (ibid.).

5.1.2 Hypothesis and Summary

Hypothesis 1 (H1): The gender which will have a higher index score in Talent Management, will also have the majority of managers in the leadership pipeline.

If we observe the index score for Talent Management in table 4:4, we can see that it is 4.27 for the female employees and 4.10 for the male employees. Our first hypothesis (H1) mentioned that the gender with the higher index score for the variable Talent Management will be the gender which has a majority of managers in the leadership pipeline. During this paper, we have established that the gender which has a majority in the leadership pipeline is male. So therefore, our first hypothesis (H1) is rejected, since the male employees have a lower index score than the female employees. This raises the question as to why the male employees have reported a lower score for Talent Management?

If we observe the table 4:5, we can see that the female employees in all levels reported a high mean score in Talent Management, while the male employees in the unknown levels can be revealed as the group to drag the mean score down enough to reject the hypothesis. What makes the male employees in the unknown levels feel less Talent Management than the rest of the employees? Looking at table 4:8, where we can see the difference amongst the employees depending on the gender of their manager, we can observe that the male employees with a male manager have a score of 4.09 in TM, while the male employees with a female manager reported a score of 4.94. This difference can explain the variance a bit, as the male employees with male managers also drag the mean score down quite a lot. Since there are more male employees with a male manager than there are male employees with a female manager, the conclusion we can draw becomes shifted. It does not necessarily mean that the male employees with a male manager are unhappy, but rather, that the male employees with a female manager are very happy. We know that the mean score for TM across all male employees is 4.1, which is very close to what the male employees with a male manager got (4.09). The score of 4.94 that the male employees with a female manager got is thus much higher than the mean score the male employees got in general, explaining that they are more

satisfied and content with the TM they have received from their manager and the organization.

To summarize this chapter, we have now observed that the organization has many different initiatives and programs to develop their employees. The manager plays a vital role in this, as they nominate and encourage their employees to further their career development. Furthermore, what can be interpreted as the most important programme the organization offers its employees is the mentorship programme. Due to the lack of diversity in the leadership pipeline, the program can not be fully operational. There is a need for improvements there to foster role models and mentors in the organization that can sustain the needs of the employees in the lower levels.

5.2 Career Self-Management

It is evident from the interviews that the manager does not only support talent management but also the career self-management of the employees. The interviewees expressed that their managers supported their career development in different ways. Also, mentors were mentioned as also positively affecting the career self-management and career development of the employees. The managers are helping to support and push the employees, making them more comfortable and self-confident to take on another role. As mentioned, effective career management requires a partnership between the employee and the organization, with both parties taking an active role in planning and managing career development (Noe, 1996).

5.2.1 Career Self-Management and Career Development

The factors in career self-management all reflect what the individual is doing to further their career development, and how the organization can actively influence their employees to do so. One way the organization is involved in the advancement of the individuals own career development is through the yearly discussions happening between the employee and the manager, where the employees career is discussed. Interviewee 6 talked about this and mentioned that it is a great way for the organization to offer the right opportunities for the individuals who are actively trying to improve their careers. Individuals who engage in career self-management behaviors are also more likely to experience career success, including job satisfaction (Strauser et al., 2015) and career well-being (Wilhelm & Hirschi, 2019).

When observing the variable Desire for Upward Mobility in figure 4:15, we can see that a majority of the employees perceives it as important to move hierarchically within the organization, so the conversation between the manager and the employee serves as a tool to help the employees to advance. The conversation might be more important than expected, since the variable Hierarchical Plateau seen in figure 4:16 demonstrates that a number of the employees feel that they would not move much higher hierarchically, so the support from their manager and organization becomes vital in inspiring the employees.

Interestingly enough, observing the Mean Career Concept, we can see that Spiral was the most chosen profile, which indicates a desire to broaden the work experiences to related areas. This indicates that the employees want to become knowledgeable in many different areas, which could allow for more horizontal movement within their career as well. One interviewee mentioned that she was at the top of her area, and that to advance within the career would, for her, mean a more horizontal relocation, rather than a straight vertical advancement. Thus, this could explain the low faith the employees perceived in their ability to move more hierarchically. But the desire is still there, which is visible when observing the Mean Career Motive. The Linear motive had the highest score, which indicates a desire to deliver strong performances. A strong performance is thus seen as a sort of currency, which unlocks the ability of movement for the employees. Whether this movement is done vertically or horizontally is not important, since there is training available within the organization to learn and specialize within your given area, or new areas. However, one interviewee also experienced that developing horizontally is more difficult than vertically within the organization. Nevertheless, the tools to offer guidance to these employees becomes of vital importance, as the more support these employees feel that they receive, the more willingness and motivation they will have to invest in themselves and continue to grow (Allen, Shore, & Griffeth, 2003).

Career self-management is also involved in making the employees feel that they have the responsibility and opportunities to manage their own career (King, 2004). This was mentioned by interviewee 6 when discussing the e-learnings they offer, where the employees themselves can sign up to participate. This allows them to tailor their own career development, and where the organization can take the role of the facilitator of the material to educate them. Furthermore, the managers in the organization can also motivate their employees to develop their careers and participate in the training that is offered. Many of the

female employees that we interviewed expressed that they had been motivated to participate in different activities and training. The perceived organizational support from the organization can include access to professional development opportunities, mentoring programs, and career advancement resources (Kraimer, Seibert, Wayne, Liden, & Bravo, 2011). Observing the variable for Perceived Organizational Support (see figure 4:7) shows that many of the employees felt that the organization cared about their career. On the other hand, the Organizational Support for Development variable (see figure 4:6) revealed that many female and male employees had a lower opinion of the support for development, which relates to the amount of training and programs available for them to utilize to reach higher levels. This could indicate that the employees feel a lack of training that helps them reach a higher level, and not training in general. Since there exist many different options for the employees, not all of them are created to be used in a clear vertical advancement. As Interviewee 5 mentioned, some of the training is there to create employees that become specialized in some way, which can indicate horizontal advancement.

One interviewee also mentioned that development programs could be offered for more senior employees as well. She thinks that once you become older and in more senior positions there is more demand to be responsible for your own career development. In other words, becoming older might put more demand on career self-management and the responsibility of the individual to manage their own career (King, 2004).

5.2.2 Career Self-Management and Gender Diversity in the Leadership Pipeline

Work-life balance has repeatedly been mentioned as an important subject for diversity, since it has the ability to impact female employees more than male employees (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Hewlett & Luce, 2005). When observing the Work-Life Balance variable, the results show that most of the employees have positive opinions regarding the organization's Work-Life Balance (see figure 4:9). Interviewee 5 mentioned that even though she was concerned that her pregnancy was gonna be an issue when receiving an internal promotion, it proved to not be an issue with her manager and instead something they worked around so that she had the ability to take the position. This could have been an example of where the Work-Life Balance was a barrier for female employees due to the family responsibilities with the pregnancy leave, but instead due to the decentralized and inclusive culture, it proved to be

less of a problem. But at the same time, this situation is a classic example of the gender bias that female employees have to endure, since they might feel hindrance due to their pregnancy (Hewlett & Luce, 2005). This might result in the female employees working harder and having to show more support just to prove that they are committed to the work (Hewlett & Luce, 2005).

This is also vital for women to establish their performance to become nominated for the succession plan and become identified as a high potential. Since these evaluations are done by the managers in the levels above, which are mostly men, they need to overcome the bias in evaluations to establish a position in the succession. When observing the secondary data, we see that the female employees are overrepresented in both the succession plan and the high potential nomination in the upper levels (see table 4:2 & 4:3). An explanation of this can be found in the mean index score in table 4:4 of the female employees in the upper levels, which has a much higher score than the male employees have. And to add to that, the male employees have a higher score on the middle levels and the unknown levels, revealing that they might have more visible motivation and development in the lower levels, which can explain the overrepresentation of male nominations at the lower levels. But nonetheless, there does not seem to be an issue of motivation from the female employees at least.

5.2.3 Hypothesis and Summary

Hypothesis 2 (H2): The gender which will have a higher index score for Career Self-Management, will also have the majority of managers in the leadership pipeline.

In table 4:4 we can observe the index score for CSM for both the genders. Male employees reported a score of 4.79, while the female employees reported a score of 4.66. The measurement used with CSM is to investigate the amount of career development the employees do from an individual perspective. So the higher the score, the more they actively try to participate and seek opportunities where they can advance and develop their own career. And connected to our second hypothesis (H2), we hypothesized that the more the employees actively try to develop and improve, the better opportunities they would find, and the better equipped they would be to advance internally within the organization. And thus, when observing the index score for CSM, we can conclude that our second hypothesis (H2) is

accepted, as the male employees reported a higher CSM score compared to the female employees, and the majority of managers in the leadership pipeline is male.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): The index score related to Career-Self Management will rank higher amongst the women that are managers, than what the index score related to Talent Management will.

Observing the mean index score for CSM and TM for the female employees (see table 4:4), we can find that the index score related to the CSM reported a higher score than what the index score for TM did. Thus, we can conclude that our third hypothesis (H3) is accepted. This indicates that the employees themselves take action and show commitment to developing and improving themselves professionally within their career, and that the organization supports them on the way, but perhaps not enough. If the TM index score was higher than CSM, that could instead indicate that the organization had issues where they offered a lot of development opportunities to the employees, but they did not have enough motivation or commitment to utilize the opportunities to its fullest extent.

To summarize, both male and female employees at the organization have a strong desire to develop and improve, as seen by the overall high score that the variables regarding CSM received. The vital aspect will be that the organization makes sure to accommodate the need the employees have regarding developing themselves, and that this is balanced amongst all the employees. Focusing on one specific area creates an unbalance that will create ripples throughout the whole leadership pipeline.

5.3 Gender Biases

Gender biases can manifest in various ways, such as through microaggressions, stereotypes, and discriminatory practices, all of which perpetuate a cycle of exclusion and that they become embedded in the policies and practices within an organization and can therefore have an affect on the growth and advancement of particularly women, in the workplace (Stephens, Rivera & Townsend, 2020).

5.3.1 Gender Biases and Career Development

It was evident during the interviews that both gender and age could affect women and their career development. One of the interviewees experienced that having or potentially having children would affect their opportunity for career development and that then taking time off was not appreciated. This is clearly related to the work-life balance issues mentioned, where women often have more family and caregiving responsibilities, which can hinder them from advancing in their careers (Hewlett & Luce, 2005; Ellemers et al., 2012). The other issue mentioned is age, where some of the interviewees mentioned that being younger, and potentially also a woman, it was hard to be heard and respected by other colleagues, especially older men. This goes against the argument that the glass ceiling effect is stronger at the top of the hierarchy than at lower levels, becoming worse later in the career stated by Cotter, Hermsen, Ovadia & Vanneman (2001), as the women mentioned more barriers when they were in younger ages.

Also mentioned in the interviews was that some women are acting like men and that women and men are perceived differently and held to different standards. This is related to the so-called "double bind", where women are penalized for adopting masculine leadership traits or criticized for being too feminine (Eagly & Karau, 2002) and that women are evaluated more harshly and held to higher standards than their male counterparts (Heilman et al., 2004). Moreover, studies indicate that women, on average, possess higher levels of emotional intelligence, which can be beneficial for effective leadership (Mandell & Pherwani, 2003). Interestingly enough, Interviewee 4 experienced that her emotional intelligence was perceived as being over emotional, compared to her male colleagues.

The numerous initiatives the organization has to preserve and develop their talents is in a constant battle with the ambition they have to be diverse and inclusive. The talent program that the organization has uses performance evaluations to identify talents within the organization. These performance evaluations are based on KPIs and other measurements, but are still subject to subjective opinions about an employee based on other factors than their performance, which can affect the evaluation (Bohnet, Van Geen & Bazerman, 2016). Gender stereotypes is one of these factors that can affect the performance evaluation (Heilman, 2001), which means that there can exist unconscious stereotypes on how the male or female employees should act or behave. When observing the gender bias items, we can observe the

item Unequal Standards (see figure 4:23), which refers to the amount of work the female employees have to do to receive the same performance evaluation as men. The three options that received the highest score by the female employees were “Very Low”, “Neutral”, and “Very High”, signaling that there exist some strong opinions regarding the subject. If the evaluation is affected by bias, it might lead to wrong judgments, which in turn can affect the performance of the organization and lead to a further undiversified top management. Upon further investigation of table 4:8 where we see the difference based on the gender of your manager, we can find that the female employees with a female manager, and the male employees with a female manager, are those that put the highest score regarding the Unequal Standards. This indicates that those with a female manager feel that the performance evaluation is unfair.

When observing Motives Manager Value Fit (see table 4:16), we can see that both female and male employees with female managers present a very high average value fit, signaling a connection both emotionally, but also in the career path and desires, with their manager. To further investigate the reason as to why the employees with female managers feel the unequal standards, we can observe the variable Male Culture 2 (see figure 4:21), which refers to the extent to which the employees of the organization assume that the top leaders will be men. This is heavily connected to the think manager, think men concept, where the employees perceive that the top managers are men, and thus, act more like men due to that (Schein, 2001). Furthermore, if employees and managers start to expect the top managers to be men, then the performance evaluations also risk being affected by this unconscious bias. But nonetheless, the employees with female managers report a very high score on the variable, compared to those with a male manager. Surprisingly enough, it is the female employees with a male manager that reports the absolutely lowest score. This can also be seen in the descriptive statistics of the variable, where 36% of the female employees answered “Very Low”, but only 16% of the male employees did that (see figure 4:21). It seems that the Gender biases connect more to those who have a female manager, perhaps due to them being more aware of it that way. During the interviews, all employees had only praise to say about their manager, which can give some insight as to how the employees might feel if the manager in question is affected by some biases in the organization, hindering their career development and progression. We know that the mentorship programme is used by a lot of the female employees in the organization, and talking about the issues and barriers they come across will affect their perception on how much gender bias there exists within the

organization. We have also acknowledged the importance of the manager - subordinate relationship within the organization, which can explain some of the opinions accumulated by the male employees who have a female manager.

5.3.2 Gender Biases and the Gender Diversity in the Leadership Pipeline

The Gender Diversity in the leadership pipeline can be described as an under-representation of female managers. There are different perspectives needed to understand the complex situation at the organization. First of all, the organization acts under a heavily male employee influenced industry, which creates initial barriers connected to this industry. They have many specialized engineers, which has an overrepresentation of male students graduating from the educational institutions. It is no wonder that these types of organizations are heavily male dominated, but it does not necessarily mean that it should be unfair towards the female actively trying to make a career within the organization, or industry. As one interviewee mentioned, she wanted to be judged based on her competence, and not on her gender. From her perspective, an inclusive environment for the organization was one where they would not be judged based on gender, but instead, on the competences and abilities they have. This brings up an important perspective needed to include, and that is the unequal treatment of the female employees based on the wish for equality. In regards to the numerous training the organization has, the talent program and the succession planning, it is obvious they are working hard to develop and preserve talent. But this runs the risk of bias, since the wish for equality can cloud the judgment of those making the evaluations or succession planning. Since many of the top managers are male, the evaluations done can be clouded by this judgment to create unfair treatments for both the male and female employees. To be promoted too high can create serious consequences for the organization (Larsson et al., 2005), and to be promoted based on gender and not on performance can be seen as one way of this happening.

When observing the succession planning (see table 4:1) we find that 91% of the male employees being nominated are from male nominators, and 9% are from female nominators. At the same time, 57% of the female employees are from female nominators, while 43% are from male nominators. So, the female nominators are not nominating many male employees at all, while the male nominators are nominating almost 50% of the females. This might not be as big of a problem as one can assume, since many of the managers are male, they are also

the majority of those that nominate. In regards to the total number of employees in the different levels, there is approximately 5% more male nominees in the lower and middle levels than it should be, while there is approximately 2% more female nominees in the succession planning for the upper levels than it should be in regards to the total number of employees in the different levels. Furthermore, we can observe the performance evaluations of high potential talents (see table 4:3), and see that this established a different view for the performance evaluation bias. If we observe the lower levels, out of all the employees nominated at that level, 74% were male employees. This is in contrast to the number of male employees employed at those levels, which is only 68%. So, they are overrepresented there, similar to how the male employees are overrepresented at the lower levels in the succession planning as well, albeit here with only 2% more. For the middle levels, the same phenomena can be found, even to a higher degree than before, which once again mirrors the succession planning. And if we assume that the top managers are high potentials, then the gender diversity at the top management tells us that 31% of the managers at the top are female, which reflects an overrepresentation based on the number of female employees at the levels below. This could be explained with the overrepresentation that female managers have at the succession planning for the upper levels, and that they will after some time have difficulties with having a diverse internal fillrate of female managers from the middle and lower levels, since there is now an overrepresentation of male managers being involved in the succession planning at those levels.

5.3.3 Hypothesis and Summary

Hypothesis 4 (H4): The Gender Biases are positively related to the higher managerial level and older ages for women, compared to men.

To investigate whether our fourth hypothesis is accepted or rejected, we observed the general attitudes that some of our demographic variables had towards the index variable of gender bias. When observing the mean score regarding the gender and the levels (see table 4:5), we can see that the unknown and lower levels have a mean score of approximately 3.5, while the middle and upper levels have a mean score of approximately 0.5 lower than the other levels. This means that the gender bias score actually decreased with the higher managerial level, and not increased. Interestingly enough, the same can be found in the age statistics for gender bias (see table 4:6), as the score increased from 18-34 year to 35-44, but then decreased for

45-54 and 55+. Thus, we can conclude that hypothesis four (H4) is rejected, as the gender bias does not increase either with managerial level, or with age. An interesting insight is that for the male employees, the gender bias did increase with the age of the employee, but not with the managerial levels. It does not come as a surprise that the higher managerial level displays an overall increased satisfaction with the job, and with the organization overall. Observing the employee engagement survey from the secondary data reveals that those at the top management have extremely high satisfaction levels, and thus, might think that the situation is better than it might be. Furthermore, the gender bias can be more noticeable for the employees at the lower levels due to the tough and competitive environment that can occur when trying to become high potentials or nominated for succession planning. Thus, if things do not go the way the employee wants, one can assume that they might blame things other than themselves, such as unfair treatment or unequal support for development.

To summarize, gender biases become a challenge when doing objective performance evaluations aimed to identify and develop high performing employees. The organization needs to balance their diversity targets with the need to secure high performing talents to increase success of the organization. Otherwise, they run a risk of promoting and evaluating the employees higher/lower based on circumstances not related to the performance of the employee, but rather demographic or personal circumstances.

5.4 Career Concepts

The career concept model uses the different career profiles to explore the leadership styles and motivations of managers in different levels in organizations. As discussed in the theoretical chapter, these profiles are dynamic and a successful manager will need to have a bit of every concept, but the importance of them varies based on the requirements of the job (Larsson et al., 2005).

5.4.1 Career Concepts and the Career Development

When managers receive promotions and their job task changes, their Career Concept and Motive needs to change as well, to accompany this shift in job requirement. Thus, the managers in the leadership pipeline will have different profiles based on their level. To explore this, we observe table 4:12 to find the mean score of the Concept that the employees in the leadership pipeline have.

As mentioned in the theory chapter, Larsson et al., (2005) investigated and found the most common successful and unsuccessful profiles among the different levels in an organization, called “the career lens of success” and “the funnel of failure” respectively. The lower levels can be compared to the supervisor level used in the article, the Middle Levels as the manager and the upper Levels as the director and VPs. Their study acknowledges that the most common profiles found in the different management levels are Linear, Spiral and Transitory, while Expert is the most common one found at the lowest level, and after that has a major linear decrease (ibid). Observing the funnel of failure, Expert was the most common found profile, with it being the primary pick for the supervisory, manager, director and VP level. The other options varied in popularity, but notably was the journey for transitory which starts very low, but then rises to become a popular choice in the VP and Senior Executive level (ibid). We can therefore now compare the results between the successful and unsuccessful profiles with the result from the survey.

Upon observation of the Mean Career Concept across the levels (see table 4:12), we see an interesting pattern which somewhat resembles the “career lens of success”, but with some differences to be found. For both male and female managers, the Expert starts as the highest score profile, but then decreases in score as we advance in the levels, similar to how it seems to be in the “career lens of success”. Most interesting is the difference now found between the male and female managers. While the “career lens of success” displays a decrease in Expert and an increase in the other profiles amongst the levels, the male managers sees a different pattern emerging. While all profiles have a relatively high score for the Middle Levels, we can observe that both Spiral and Transitory have a score lower than Expert for the upper Levels, with only Linear having a higher score. This makes it look more like the success profile of the Manager level in the “Career lens of success”, which could indicate an overpromotion of the top performers in the middle levels.

For the female managers, the pattern is very identical to that the top 20% of the managers display. The middle levels show a similar score to that of the male managers, but then it changes drastically for the upper Levels. The Expert profile decreases and becomes the profile with the lowest score, while the Transitory increases to have a similar score to that of Linear and Spiral. This is almost identical to the upper Levels of the “Career Lens of success”, showing no signs of overpromotion.

It is interesting that the male managers had such high scores on Expert, since the previous research tells us that these should decrease amongst those that are performing well (Larsson et al., 2005), but in this case, they only seem to increase or stay as a popular choice. The characteristic of Expert as the profile where the employees become as good as possible in the given area can be tempting, especially considering the amount of possibilities available within the organization. Interviewee 5 mentioned that those that perform well enough to become regarded as high performers receive rewards, so there exists incentive within the organization to become competent within the area. But it still does not explain why the results were so different between the male and female managers. One explanation can be that the nature of the work is different for the male managers and the female managers. Some of the interviewees mentioned that it is more common to find higher level managers in HR or marketing, compared to the male managers which often have a business background, such as finance or engineering. This can indicate that the different roles require different requirements, which can be mirrored in the way that the mean scores were for the Career Concept. Previous research also mentioned that Expert is a Career Concept most commonly found amongst male managers, which also can explain its high score.

5.4.2 Career Concepts and the Gender Diversity in the Leadership Pipeline

The Career Concepts have the ability to affect the gender diversity in the leadership pipeline in the sense that all the different profiles have a characteristic, which also will determine how the employees judge them. We have established that different managerial levels require different profiles to be successful, which is therefore reflected in the requirements of the role. The more traditional concepts of Expert and Linear, which have been concepts mainly inherited by men (Larsson et al., 2003), fits well in vertical organizations with corporate hierarchies, which fits the organization well. This can create an assumption that it is mostly men who will have the characteristics of the profiles that are required. This can be seen in the variable Male Culture 2, where the employees feel that many assume that the top leaders will be men, perhaps due to the unconscious bias that they fit the characteristics that the top leaders will have. This can be traced back to the measurement method of using performance evaluations to scout and find high-potential employees. This makes the most important characteristic of an employee, who wants to have good opportunities for development, the performance it has. And if men are more natural in adopting the Expert and Linear profiles, it

can cause issues for the female managers when trying to also become high performers. This can indicate that the organization should look for more diverse and varied ways to measure performance when doing evaluations. We can observe in the Mean Career Concept and Motive that the female and male employees have similar scores, which can indicate that there is a fixed pattern among the employees that decides how they should act, and think. With a more varied approach to performance, there is a possibility that the male and female employees will start to display more varied profiles in the different levels. But perhaps the nature of the organizations stops that from happening, since they will always be driven to perform at the top of their ability, which requires employees that have been trained to do so.

When discussing that the employees will be driven to perform at the top of their ability, an interesting insight can be found in the table 4:15 displaying the Mean Manager Values relative to the Gender of the Manager. When observing the female employees score with a female manager, it is the lowest amongst all the groups. This can be an indication that while the female managers enable the male employees (due to their high scores), they somehow do not enable the female managers in the same way. The manager/employee relationship might be different in a way that does not allow for them to really connect motivationally in the same way that the female managers do with the male employees. This can be further strengthened by observing the mean Index Score for TM, where the female employees with a female manager had the lowest score (3.95), while the male employees with a female manager had the highest (4.94). This lack of enablement from the female managers to the female employees can create issues when establishing a gender diversity in the leadership pipeline, since it will make it more difficult for the female employees to give strong performances, so that they can advance in the levels.

To further explore the effect that the Career Concept Model has on the leadership pipeline, we can observe the Motives Manager Value Fit (see table 4:16). The female managers have a good average score with both the male and female employees. Thus, they seem to match their direct reports career motives with their expressed manager values better than the male managers, who have a lower average for both the male and female direct reports. With female employees having the lowest average career motives fit with their direct male manager, this can cause issues for the whole organization if this pattern is representative of the whole organization. Since the leadership pipeline at the top has almost 100% male managers, they have an average better value fit with their male direct reports, rather than their female. This

can indicate that the male managers have a motivational advantage over their female colleagues when being assessed, nominated and selected.

Additionally, the female managers seem to be better at matching both their male and female direct reports' career motives with their manager values. Thus, both male and female managers would benefit from having more female managers above them in the leadership pipeline. But, it is interesting to notice that the female managers have a higher average fit with their male direct reports, compared to their female direct reports. Thus, the male managers have an advantage when being assessed by a female manager. This can also be a contributing factor why the leadership pipeline is not diverse, since the higher average will affect the leadership pipeline over time, and shift the pendulum in the male managers favor.

5.4.3 Hypothesis and Summary

Hypothesis 5 (H5): The Linear Concept will have a higher mean score amongst male employees, than female employees.

Observing the mean Career Concept, we can see that the Linear mean score for the male employees is higher than what it is for the female employees. Thus our fifth (H5) hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis 6 (H6): As the managerial level increases, the mean score of Linear motives will also increase.

Furthermore, if we observe the mean Career Motives across the levels, we can observe that the Linear motives does not follow a specific pattern, but due to the high scores it received at the lower levels, it does not sustain the scores in the middle and upper levels, which results in the Linear Motives score for the upper levels being the lowest amongst the levels. And thus, our sixth hypothesis (H6) is rejected.

Hypothesis 7 (H7): As the managerial level increases, the mean score of Expert Concept and Motives will decrease.

And in regards to our last hypothesis (H7), we can observe in the table 4:28 & 4:29 the mean Career Concept and Motives across the levels. This reveals that Expert starts at the highest score for lower levels for both male and female managers, to then lower a bit for the middle levels, until it is at its lowest in the upper levels. So, seeing as the Expert Concept and Motive has its mean score decreased as the managerial level increases, that concludes that our seventh hypothesis (H7) is accepted. Thus, our findings collaborate with the findings from the previous literature (Larsson et al., 2005).

To summarize, the Career Concept Model reveals that the different Career Concepts and Motives all have their uses in different stages of the leadership pipeline. By observing the previous research and comparing with the profiles found in the leadership pipeline, we can identify the success profiles in the given organization, which gives us insight to the characteristics of success. Furthermore, the effect the Career Concept and Motives had on the gender diversity in the leadership pipeline was explored, which revealed some differences that provided some explanations to the lack of gender diversity in the leadership pipeline in the organization.

6. Conclusions

In this concluding chapter we will discuss each research question individually, making conclusions from the analysis chapter above and finish the chapter with conclusions, main findings, contributions, practical implications and future research.

6.1 Research Question 1

How does gender biases affect the lack of gender diversity in the leadership pipeline?

Gender biases can significantly contribute to the lack of gender diversity in the leadership pipeline. Effective diversity and inclusivity initiatives need to be implemented at all operational levels, not just among senior managers, to align with the organizational goals. This is due to the nature of the pipeline, where the same opportunities need to exist at all levels, to not create an imbalance which goes against the goal of diversity. We have established that there is an overrepresentation of female managers being nominated to the more senior positions, which will create more gender equality at the senior positions. But at the same time, the overrepresentation of male nominations amongst the lower and middle levels will create an unfavorable balance at those levels towards the male employees, which can have severe consequences in the future. One example of a consequence can be that they need to recruit more externally due to the lack of female managers in the leadership pipeline, which can create a barrier for gender diversity. This is due to the difficulty the organization has in finding female talents when recruiting since the industry is mostly male dominated.

Gender biases can influence the system the organization has in place to evaluate their employees. Previous research mentions that men tend to have more Expert and Linear views, but as we can see from the survey results, this is more equal in our sample between the genders. But it cannot be excluded if the views inhabited by the employees originate from their own passion and motivations, or rather, if the organization and the managers affect the employees to change the views to fit the industry more. Since the more traditional views are preferred by men, it can give them an advantage when adopting the more vertical and hierarchical direction. More evaluation tools could decrease gender biases, but could increase a more vague system, which could be difficult for a profit driven organization in a competitive market.

Furthermore, existing gender biases perceptions among female employees can initiate a negative spiral. Many female employees express a desire for more communication and mentorship opportunities with other women in management roles, as a way to see the possibility of reaching senior positions. Yet, promoting female managers prematurely to provide these role models could result in gender bias and does not provide a sustainable solution for equality. We know from the survey results that many employees believe that there exists an assumption that the top leaders will be men, so to have senior managers that they could talk to becomes vital for their development and advancement. Therefore, the organization should focus on cultivating a supportive environment at all levels that can foster and retain ambitious employees, thereby creating a balanced leadership pipeline. This balance will naturally produce role models or mentors, promoting the growth and development of younger employees.

6.2 Research Question 2

What, if any, are the perceived barriers that employees encounter when attaining senior management positions and what role do these potential barriers have in explaining the lack of gender diversity in the leadership pipeline?

Our findings indicate several perceived barriers impacting the opportunity for employees to progress towards senior roles, which may contribute to the observed lack of gender diversity in the leadership pipeline. One interviewee mentioned that the perception from managers of someone in a management position taking time off work due to childcare would not be perceived well. Another interviewee, who was pregnant during her recruitment, was worried it might be an obstacle. While her organization handled the situation well, she noted a manager from a different country was displeased about her pregnancy. This highlights how cultural differences and varying norms can create potential barriers. The cultural differences can therefore create barriers as there are different norms and assumptions that decide what is culturally acceptable to do, and what is not.

Another interviewee expressed that her challenge was not achieving the position but gaining respect afterwards. This is potentially tied to the higher standards female employees are held to, as indicated by another interviewee, where they need to prove their competence and demonstrate increased commitment. It can also be connected to the stereotypes that exist

regarding female leadership capabilities, since many employees perceive the managers as male, the female managers thus have to prove themselves since they are not the norm. This was also found in the interviews when young, high-performing female employees, promoted to senior roles early in their careers, struggled with being heard by older managers due to perceptions of lacking experience or maturity.

We established that the female managers have a better Value Fit with the male and female managers than what the male managers have. So, it would be better for the organization to have more female managers in the leadership pipeline, since they fit better motivationally than the male managers, and will therefore increase the perceived support from the organization that the employees feel. The problem arose when observing the female employees with a female manager, who reported a much higher gender bias, and a less average on both talent management and career-self management. Without being able to enable the employees, the relationship between the female managers and female direct reports will not yield sufficient results to shift the weight in the leadership pipeline. It will instead make the male managers more preferable, since they make the employees feel a better support and therefore improve their career development. That will consequently make it desirable to have male managers in the senior management positions, since they will then act as direct reports for more female managers, which indirectly acts as a gender barrier for the female managers to gain these senior management positions. This makes it more difficult for female managers in the leadership pipeline to establish the same connection with their managers, or their direct reports, if that manager is a female. To break through and establish a diverse leadership pipeline requires that the organization looks at the motivational factors empowering their employees and managers, to identify the contributing factors that are keeping the female managers at a disadvantage, while giving the male managers an advantage.

However, beyond these points, no further barriers to attaining senior management roles were evident. The interviewees and the survey participants were generally satisfied with their progression process and encountered no additional barriers. Moreover, with more female managers being nominated for higher positions by male managers, our data suggests internal recruitment is also not posing barriers. Also, given the considerable support employees perceive to receive from the organization, as validated by Hypothesis 1, it may explain the minimal perceived barriers within the organization.

6.3 Research Question 3

How do individual and organizational factors counter the lack of gender diversity in the leadership pipeline?

In regard to the research question above, we can conclude that both individual and organizational factors can, in different ways, counter the lack of gender diversity in the leadership pipeline. One aspect is mentorship, which is essential for the individual's career development. It is related to both the individual and organizational factors, in the sense that an employee seeking mentorship must have this demand met by the organization.

We can conclude that having a mentor, and especially women having a mentor of the same gender, is important for providing valuable insights, encouraging opportunities for development, and giving emotional support. Women can also learn from the mentors' experiences in overcoming gender-related barriers in their careers. Mentorship can also help boost self-confidence, create a sense of belonging, and encourage ambition. Moreover, promoting women leaders as role models within the organization can serve to inspire others and illustrate that women can and do succeed in leadership roles.

However, our results indicate that there is a lack of mentorship opportunities and role models within the organization, which has been found to have a significant impact on the employees career development. The organization should therefore encourage women to seek mentors and role models, even outside the organization if necessary, since this exposure to women in leadership can not only provide practical guidance and career advice but also improve the visibility of women in the organization. Furthermore, the organization could provide more networking opportunities for women to be able to have conversations regarding these issues, as the survey and interview results indicate that women experience a lack of mentorship opportunities, role models and networking.

Other organizational factors that can counter the lack of gender diversity in the leadership pipeline are training and other programs for career development. These are found to be very valuable in terms of career development, both professionally and personally, as they can promote advancement.

Furthermore, the direct manager of employees has been found to be essential for the career development of employees. It is crucial for employees to engage with their managers regarding their aspirations and career goals. Managers can provide guidance, feedback, and opportunities for growth, especially during the yearly conversations that the employees and managers have. By recognizing potential in employees, regardless of their gender, can significantly contribute to promoting women in the leadership pipeline.

Another organizational aspect is the culture in the organization, as this is proven to be important for career development as well. A supportive and encouraging organizational environment is essential for promoting gender diversity in leadership. Organizations should create safe spaces for women to voice their concerns and challenges, as well as offer resources and support for addressing them.

In summary, both individual and particularly organizational factors can address the issue of the lack of gender diversity. While organizations actively engage in various initiatives to foster gender diversity, it is essential to achieve a synergy between organizational efforts and individual aspirations to truly promote diversity and inclusion. Moreover, the problem extends to societal norms, as women often refrain from pursuing careers traditionally dominated by men for a variety of reasons. Ultimately, the issue is multifaceted with these factors interconnected, necessitating further research to delve deeper into this complex issue.

6.4 Conclusions

In this final part we will first present a summary of our main findings, thereafter we will discuss contributions, practical implications, and lastly suggestions for potential future research.

6.4.1 Main Findings

The main findings of the study are that gender biases have a significant impact on the lack of gender diversity within the leadership pipeline, with overrepresentation of male nominations in the lower and middle management levels, potentially forcing more external recruitment and creating a gender diversity barrier. There is a strong desire amongst female employees for increased mentorship and communication with other women in senior roles, yet the premature promotion of women to such positions is not viewed as a sustainable solution.

Different barriers, such as pregnancy, lack of respect after attaining a management position, and age-related challenges, were experienced by employees when aiming for senior positions. These barriers have a role in explaining the lack of gender diversity in leadership roles, along with the relationship between the gender of the employees and the manager, which can have strong implications on the employees career development. This consequently offers advantages to the male employees seeking to achieve senior management positions within the organization. Moreover, organizational support, evident through initiatives like mentorship programs and training opportunities, is crucial for career progression. The culture within an organization and the behavior of direct managers, particularly in recognizing and combating unconscious biases, are also essential factors for career development and achieving gender diversity in leadership. The visibility of women in leadership roles, as well as fostering environments that allow women to voice their concerns, are important steps towards addressing the lack of gender diversity in leadership positions.

6.4.2 Contributions

This study provides many contributions to the research field. Since there is a scarcity of case studies on specific organizations and how they perceive and counter the lack of gender diversity in their leadership pipeline, this study can provide a practical example of how the organization works in dealing with these issues. Moreover, using a mixed-method has also contributed to a more rich, more comprehensive, and more nuanced understanding of the phenomena.

6.4.3 Practical Implications

Since we have conducted a case study we believe that our research has many practical implications for mainly the organization, but also for other organizations experiencing a lack of gender diversity. Firstly, our conclusions can guide organizations in creating and implementing policies and initiatives that further promote gender diversity in leadership roles. It can also promote efforts to transform the organizational culture, helping to challenge and change biases and foster a more inclusive environment that values diversity.

This study does not only have profound implications for the career advancement and development of women and the organizational performance and reputation but also for social

justice and equality in society. By highlighting the gaps and barriers in the leadership pipeline, the case study can stimulate critical discussions about gender equality at a societal level and push to rethink views on women in leadership positions and foster a wider cultural shift towards acceptance and empowerment of women. Moreover, this study can also guide legislation and public policies by presenting practical data on the existing barriers, it can influence lawmakers and regulators to enact policies that promote gender equality in the workplace, not just as an ethical necessity, but also as a matter of social justice. Lastly, it offers a chance to educate the public about the importance of gender diversity in leadership. By doing so, it can play an essential role in changing societal attitudes, inspiring women to aspire to leadership positions, and encouraging society as a whole to support them.

In conclusion, the practical implications of this study reach far beyond organizational boundaries and have the potential to inspire significant societal changes towards gender equality.

6.4.4 Future Research

Referring back to our demarcations, where we declared not to adopt an intersectional perspective, this could serve as a potential starting point for future research. As the discourse in this field is increasingly moving beyond just a gender perspective, to encompass aspects such as class and ethnicity, a study embracing this perspective could be highly relevant and contemporary.

Furthermore, a more cultural approach could be embraced, since there were obvious differences regarding the countries that the participants worked in. Seeing the cultural differences could inspire more research into the subject, and inspire countries to adapt to whatever is efficient in creating diversity in the modern organizational landscape.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Survey

Section one - Demographic questions:

Q1: What gender do you identify as?

- Female
- Male
- Other/Do not want to answer

Q2: How old are you?

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+

Q3: How long have you worked at (organization)?

- <3 months
- 3-6 months
- 6-12 months
- 1-2 years
- 2-4 years
- 4-6 years
- 6-10 years
- 10+ years

Q4: In what country are you working?

- Alternatives for every country that they are active in will be available

Q5: What level are you in the organization?

- L1 - L10

Q6: Are you a Manager?

- Yes
- No

Q7: What gender does your manager identify as?

- Male
- Female
- Other/do not want to answer

Section Two - Variables relating to Talent Management and Career-Self Management

Please answer each question by choosing the number between 1 and 7 that best represents the extent of your answer.

Q8: Perceived Career Success (PCS)

- **Item 1:** To what extent are you satisfied with the success you have achieved in your career?

Q9: Perceived Career Opportunities (PCO)

- **Item 2:** To what extent does it exist career opportunities within (organization) that are attractive to you?

Q10: Desire for upward mobility - (DUM) Reversed

- **Item 3:** To what extent is moving up the organizational hierarchy at (organization) important to you?

Q11: Hierarchical Plateau (HP)

- **Item 4:** To what extent have you reached a point where you do not expect to move much higher hierarchically at (organization)?

Q12: Perceived Organizational Support (POS)

- **Item 5:** To what extent do you feel that (organization) cares about your career development?

Q13: Organizational Support for Development (OSD)

- **Item 6:** To what extent does (organization) have career development programs and policies that help you reach higher managerial levels?

Q14: Networking Behavior (NB)

- **Item 7:** To what extent do you attempt to interact with influential people in your division or department, which could help further your career progression?

Q15: Role Models (RM)

- **Item 8:** To what extent do you feel that you have role models at (organization)?

Q16: Career Mentoring (CM)

- **Item 9:** To what extent has your current manager given or recommended you for assignments that increased your contact with higher level managers?

Q17: Sought Career Guidance (SCG)

- **Item 10:** To what extent have you asked your manager for career guidance?

Q18: Self-Nomination (SF)

- **Item 11:** To what extent do you make your manager aware of your accomplishments?

Q19: Work-Life Balance (WLB)

- **Item 12:** To what extent does (organization) value your work-life balance?

Q20,21: Performance Appraisal (PA)

- **Item 13:** To what extent do you believe (organization) has good methods of measuring your performance?
- **Item 14:** To what extent do you believe (organization) has good methods of measuring your potential?

Section Three - Variables relating to Gender Biases

Q22: Male Culture (MC1)

- **Item 15:** To what extent is there pressure in your organization to conform to gender stereotypes?

Q23: Glass Cliff (GC)

- **Item 16:** To what extent have you been held responsible for organizational problems outside of your control?

Q24: Male Culture (MC2)

- **Item 17:** To what extent do people in your organization assume that top leaders will be men?

Q25: Unequal standards (US)

- **Item 18:** To what extent do women have to work harder than men to achieve the same performance evaluation?

Q26: Lack of Sponsorship - (LOS) Reversed

- **Item 19:** To what extent have other leaders not supported you to become promoted to higher managerial positions?

Q27: Lack of acknowledgement (LOA)

- **Item 20:** To what extent do you find it difficult to gain support for your ideas when you are the only man/woman/other at a meeting?

Q28: Queen Bee Syndrome (QBS)

- **Item 21:** To what extent have women in higher positions made your job more difficult?

Section Four - Variables relating to Career Concept Model

Q29,30,31,32: Career Orientation

- **Item 22:** How attractive do you find a career where you specialize longterm within a professional area to become as good as possible in it?

- **Item 23:** How attractive do you find a career where you advance to higher managerial positions and lead increasingly many coworkers?
- **Item 24:** How attractive do you find a career where you broaden your work experiences to related areas approximately every 5 to 10 years?
- **Item 25:** How attractive do you find a career where you frequently change to completely new job areas?

Q33,34,35,36: Career Motivation

- **Item 26:** How much are you motivated by creativity?
- **Item 27:** How much are you motivated by refining your in-depth expertise?
- **Item 28:** How much are you motivated by variety?
- **Item 29:** How much are you motivated by leading towards greater performance?

Q37,38,39,40: Manager Values

- **Item 30:** To what extent does your manager not value creative teamwork? - **Reversed**
- **Item 31:** To what extent does your manager value long-term quality?
- **Item 32:** To what extent does your manager value fast customer adaptation?
- **Item 33:** To what extent does your manager value achieving high performance?

Appendix 2: Interview Guide

1. Welcome the participant and thank them for taking part in the interview.
 - Ask if we have permission to record and take notes during the interview

2. Presenting ourselves and the study. Explain the purpose of the interview: to understand employee perceptions of career development opportunities and potential gender bias within the organization.
 - We are two students named Isabelle and Fabian who are studying Master in Management and Lund University. In collaboration with [Organization], we are conducting a study on career development and diversity, and would like to get your input on this important topic! This interview aims to gather information on the preferences and perceptions of career development opportunities, and diversity within the organization. By participating in this survey, you will play a vital role in shaping career development initiatives at [Organization]. Additionally, the insight gained on

diversity will help create a better and more inclusive workplace for everyone involved.

- Ask if you have done the survey. If yes: any questions? If no: explain briefly what the survey was about
3. Presenting what the participation inclines, what the data will be used for and that it also will be deleted after the thesis is done. Assure confidentiality and anonymity.
 4. Present the agenda for the interview
 - The interview is semi-structured and will focus on you and your experiences and perceptions, it will be divided into different themes and we will clarify when we are changing the theme. The interview will last for approximately 45 minutes.
 5. Open up for questions and inform that the interviewee can ask questions and add things during the interview, and also have the opportunity to do that after as well.

First theme: Opening questions: 10 min

1. Demographic questions
 - a. Age?
 - b. What country are you working in?
2. Do you want to tell us a little about yourself and your professional background?
 - a. Education and previous work experiences?
 - b. How long have you been working at [Organization]?
3. Do you want to tell us about your current role and what your responsibilities are?
 - a. Job description? Tasks?
 - b. Your place in the hierarchy? Are you a part of a management team? Do you have subordinates? What level are you on?
 - c. Tell us about your role as a manager, what do you find important? How would you describe yourself as a manager?
 - d. Tell us about your manager. What gender is your manager? What do you appreciate about her/him?**
 - e. Tell us about the team you are responsible for.
4. Tell us about the culture and values at [Organization]?
 - a. How do you think that these are? Do they fit you? Are you comfortable with them?
 - b. How is the culture in your team? With your manager?

Second theme: Career development: 10 min

5. Have you had multiple roles at [Organization]?

- a. How was your experience of the promotion process? Performance and potential appraisal? Who was involved?
 - b. How long did it take for you to be promoted?
 - c. Were you active in that process? Did you make your manager aware of your performance and potential?
 - d. Were you satisfied with it? With your career so far?
6. How do you experience your opportunities for career development?
- a. Your opportunities for training and development?
 - b. Do you think that this is the same in all of [Organization]?
 - c. Do you think that there are differences culturally? Between countries? Gender? Age?
7. What are the biggest challenges you have faced concerning your career development?
- a. Lack of training?
 - b. Lack of support from organization and/or manager?
 - c. Lack of work-life balance?
8. What are you motivated by in your work and career?
- a. How would you describe your dream career?
 - b. What is your main motivation in your career?

Third theme: Mentors, role models and networking: 10 min

9. Is there sufficient availability of coaching and mentoring at [Organization]?
10. Do you have sufficient mentors and role models at [Organization]? (it does not have to be a manager)
 - a. Are these men/women?
11. Are you actively seeking mentoring, career guidance and network opportunities?
 - a. From women or men?
 - b. From your managers or others? What gender?
 - c. Have you felt like this has changed through the years? Since you were younger, the beginning of your career?

Fourth theme: Role, responsibility and relationship with manager and subordinates: 10 min

- 12. What is your relationship with your manager?**
 - a. Do you feel that you can ask for help?**
 - b. Do you feel that you can go to your manager and ask for support?**
 - c. What do you think your manager values?**
 - d. Would you consider your relationship to be formal or informal? Are you friends outside of the workplace?**
13. Do you feel like you have to take responsibility for things that go wrong?

- a. Do you feel like you get praised when things go right?
 - b. Do you think that these are different based on gender?
 - c. Do you feel that you get support for your ideas?
14. What is your relationship with your subordinates?
- a. Do you feel that they can ask you for help?
 - b. Do you feel that they can go to you and ask for support?
 - c. What do you think your subordinates value?
 - d. Do you give praise to your subordinates? How do you handle things when they go wrong?
 - e. Would you consider your relationship with your subordinates to be formal or informal? Are you friends outside of the workplace?

Finishing questions: 5 min

- 15. How do you perceive the gender diversity at [Organization]? What strengths and weaknesses do you see? Do you see that it differs in levels? Other aspects?**
16. Do you have anything to add before we finish?
17. How did you experience the interview? Was it as expected? Do you have any feedback for us?
18. If you would like to add anything else you can email us.

Thank you for participating!

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