Shivali Singh

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A Qualitative Study on Prevention of Sexual Harassment in the Higher Education Sector

Master's thesis

NTNU
Norwegian University of
Science and Technology

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Master's thesis in Work and Organizational Psychology
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Abstract

There is no singular agreed definition of sexual harassment, which is why the initial purpose of this study is to look into how sexual harassment is understood in the higher education sector. The higher education sector has pointed out the necessity of research on sexual harassment. Hence, the key purpose of this study is to scrutinise how complex organisations can work with preventive measures against sexual harassment. Six participants from different institutions in Norway were interviewed. The qualitative method of interpretative phenomenological analysis was carried out to analyse the data, which resulted in three superordinate themes: *the concept of sexual harassment, the tools of prevention, and the organisational foundations of prevention.* The findings revealed that the severity of sexual harassment is mostly perceived through the legal lens, while gender and power imbalances are the perceived sociocultural mechanisms behind occupational sexual harassment. #MeToo and the grey areas of sexual harassment are also essential parts of the findings. Moreover, the findings of the key purpose of the thesis reveal two cultural aspects, that are proposed as important tools of prevention to focus on. Additionally, in order to work on the culture, it is proposed to have established certain organisational foundations. Based on the present findings, the following suggestions on how organisations can work with preventive measures against sexual harassment are discussed: *acknowledge organisational inadequacies and improvements, establish and invest in organisational foundations, improve the cultural preventive actions, and enhance organisational awareness, knowledge and memory.* The suggestions are mere abstract recommendations.

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Sammendrag

Det er ikke enighet om en gitt definisjon på begrepet seksuell trakassering, derfor er et av formålene med denne studien å se på hvordan seksuell trakassering forstås i universitet- og høgskolesektoren. Universitet- og høgskolesektoren har påpekt nødvendigheten av forskning på seksuell trakassering. Derfor er neste formål, som er hovedformålet med denne studien, å granske hvordan komplekse organisasjoner kan jobbe med forebyggende tiltak mot seksuell trakassering. Seks deltagere fra ulike institusjoner i Norge ble intervjuet for datainnsamling. Den kvalitative metoden fortolkende fenomenologisk analyse ble benyttet for å analysere dataene, som resulterte i tre overordnede temaer: *seksuell trakassering som konsept, verktøy for forebygging og organisatoriske grunnlag for forebygging.* Funnene avdekket at alvorlighetsgraden av seksuell trakassering stort sett oppfattes gjennom den legale linsen, mens kjønns- og makt-ubalanser er de opplevde sosiokulturelle mekanismene bak seksuell trakassering. #MeToo bevegelsen og gråsonene av seksuell trakassering er også viktige deler av deltakernes forståelse. Videre avslører funnene to kulturelle aspekter som er foreslått som viktige forebyggingsverktøy å fokusere på. I tillegg til å jobbe med de kulturelle aspektene, foreslås det å ha etablert visse organisatoriske grunnlag. Basert på disse funnene, diskuteres de følgende forslag til hvordan organisasjoner kan jobbe med forebyggende tiltak mot seksuell trakassering*: anerkjenne organisatoriske mangler og forbedringer, etablere og investere i organisasjonsgrunnlag, forbedre de kulturelle forebyggende handlingene, og styrke organisasjonens bevissthet, kunnskap og minne.* Forslagene som er nevnt for videre arbeid er kun abstrakte anbefalinger.

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Introduction

The American newspaper, The New York times, published an article in October 2017 with allegations against the famous Hollywood producer, Harvey Weinstein. The allegations detailed serious sexual harassment claims, which led to his termination from his company within three days (Hudson, 2018). In this context, actress Alyssa Milano began the famous hashtag #MeToo (originally created by Taran Burke) through Twitter in order to give people a sense of, as well as to grasp, the magnitude of this problem. The hashtag spread virally on social media across the world, having reportedly been mentioned millions of times (Hudson, 2018). The hashtag became a movement. A movement that led to various accusations against male celebrities and public figures, and is an ongoing battle, even today. It did not take long for the movement to land on the Norwegian soil with a broad impact, arguably caused by media's initial focus (Sletteland, 2018). In December 2017, the well-known politician Trond Giske became such a famous face of sexual harassment allegations, this ultimately led to an end of his career as an influential politician (Orgeret, 2019). The famous faces gave a push to #MeToo, and several occupations in Norway began their own petitions through hashtags, such as #notonthemenu (restaurant-industry); #systemdown (IT); #metooakademia (academics) (Orgeret, 2019; Sletteland, 2018). Consequently, the attention expanded, also with the help of an extensive media coverage. #MeToo brought sexual harassment back to the agenda.

Sexual Harassment – Why It Is Still Relevant

Occupational sexual harassment and sexual assault are worldwide, chronic public health issues, that have been in our surroundings ever since women began to embark their ways into the working life. Catharine MacKinnon, a pioneer behind the legal claim that sexual harassment was a form of sex discrimination, wrote in her book in 1979 that sexual harassment is less epidemic than endemic, thus it is a natural part of women's lives (Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2018). Targets of sexual harassment perceive such degrading behaviour as offensive, upsetting, stressful, annoying, humiliating, embarrassing, intimidating, and frightening (Burn, 2019; Langer, 2017). According to Burn (2019), from a psychological perspective, sexual harassment matters because it is a frequent cause of pain and suffering. Psychological research has found a wide range of negative personal, as well as professional, outcomes for those who have been targets of sexual harassment (Kabat-Farr & Crumley, 2019). Emotional and physical stress, and stress-related mental and physical illnesses, can be a result of the diminishing, dehumanising, and disempowering feelings caused by sexual harassment (Buchanan et al., 2018; Burn, 2019; Friborg et al., 2017).

Additionally, it can be a risk factor for negative body image, eating disorders (Burn, 2019) and potentially reduce the targets' sense of safety (Donnelly & Calogero, 2018). Moreover, sexual harassment is a counterproductive work behaviour that is of concern for the individual employee, teams and the organisation as a whole (Burn, 2019; Kabat-Farr & Crumley, 2019). Some negative impacts for the individual employee include lower job and career satisfaction, decrease in work motivation and productivity, job burnout, reduced organisational commitment, and increased absenteeism (Burn, 2019; Holland & Cortina, 2016; Kabat-Farr & Crumley, 2019). Similar negative outcomes are also associated with individuals who are not directly targeted, but who are simply a part of a working environment that includes such counterproductive behaviour, this is termed as 'ambient harassment' (Kabat-Farr & Crumley, 2019). Teams who are affected by ambient harassment has been found to have increased team conflicts, lower team cohesion and reduced financial performance (Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2018; Quick & McFadyen, 2017; Raver & Gelfand, 2005). In addition, sexual harassment can become a legal and financial organisational cost by losing quality employees, lose productivity, negatively impact the company and industry reputation, and potentially even lose business due to tarnished organisational reputation (Burn, 2019; Quick & McFadyen, 2017). Although, the world has made progress since MacKinnon claimed sexual harassment in the legislation, it is still an ongoing occupational issue that needs attention. After all, there is even now a continuous struggle with the very definition of sexual harassment (Quick & McFadyen, 2017), which will be addressed in this thesis.

The Relevancy within The Higher Education Sector of Norway

Besides being the cause of psychological and organisational distress, sexual harassment is often considered to be a symptom and a cause of gender and social inequalities (Burn, 2019), such as power imbalances. The influence of power is a significant attention in the sexual harassment literature (Tenbrunsel et al., 2019). Power is claimed to be an instrument used to exert control over those with less power, through sexual harassment. There is an agreement that sexual harassment tendencies are prevalent where there are opportunities of increased power imbalances, commonly among men and women, thus it becomes a significant contributing factor to harassment (Campbell & Chinnery, 2018; Hunt, et al., 2010). Due to the high rates of sexual harassment in organisations with greater power differences (McLaughlin et al., 2012) it is considered more likely to occur in academia given that universities are characterised by noteworthy power imbalances, such as between PhD candidates and faculties (Tenbrunsel et al., 2019). Additionally, the hierarchical

characteristics of academia may create bigger opportunity for social inequalities and power imbalances, and make sexual harassment more likely (Tenbrunsel et al., 2019).

In the light of #MeToo several instances were reported in the higher education sector of Norway. This led to more serious work in order to survey the severity of sexual harassment in the sector. For instance, sexual harassment was added as a component in the work environment surveys at some institutions. The biggest step was taken in spring 2019 when a national survey on bullying and harassment was conducted, where 23 out of 33 higher education institutions in Norway took part. The results were published in August 2019 (Ipsos, 2019). 17.984 out of 43.000 employees participated in the survey. 299 of the respondents (1,6 percent) stated to have experienced sexual harassment in their current work situation (past 12 months). In addition, 18 respondents have reported sexual assault, whereas 35 respondents have reported to be uncertain if their experience can be classified as sexual assault. PhD students were recognised as the most vulnerable group among the respondents, which can be associated with power imbalances. However, the survey also showed that both, bullying and harassment, were conducted by colleagues, rather than leaders. The ordinary discrimination grounds of gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disabilities did not come out as the principal causes behind neither bullying or harassment. Based on that it is indicated that the issues can be lying in organisational causes, inter alia the work environment. UHRMOT (Universitets- og høgskolerådets arbeidsgruppe mot mobbing og trakassering i UH-sektoren), who have been a driving force behind this work, and The Kif-committee (Kjønnsbalanse og mangfold i forskning) have pointed out the necessity of research on this field, especially in regard to better measures, problem solving, and prevention. The latter is the aimed direction of this thesis.

The Sensitive Issue and The Complex Organisation

This thesis is looking into sexual harassment in the higher education sector with a focus on the preventive work. Higher education institutions and their environment can be described as complex systems. A complex system is understood as non-linear and dynamic, and is consisted of many sub-entities with multiple connections between them (Pinheiro & Young, 2017). In line with this definition, Pinheiro and Young (2017) classify higher education as an "emergent, self-organisational, and dynamic complex system where the relations amongst the actors or agents are characterised as nonlinear, with the relations amongst system elements and with other systems being coevolutionary" (p.5). While the organisational context of this research is described as a complex system or a complex organisation, the phenomenon of sexual harassment can be described as a sensitive

organisational issue. Jehn and Jonsen (2010) divide sensitive issues into two primary dimensions, namely harm and frequency. *Harm* occurs rarely, but each case can come with damaging consequences for either individuals or the organisation (Jehn & Jonsen, 2010). *Frequency* is associated with issues that happen frequently, where each incident create limited impact on the involved persons (Jehn & Jonsen, 2010). Sexual harassment is undoubtedly a sensitive issue that can be classified under the dimension of harm. There are relatively rare reported cases in the higher education institutions of Norway. These cases may not necessarily disrupt the organisation as a whole, however, once such a case occurs, it ends up shaking the world for those involved. In Norway, an organisation and the employer are obligated by law to preclude and seek to prevent sexual harassment (Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act, 2017). These factors make the preventive direction of this thesis even more relevant.

Research Question and Aim

Sexual harassment is an issue that needs to be understood in order to discuss it, handle it, or work preventively with. Even after decades of research, there is still lack of a clear and consistent definition (Quick & McFadyen, 2017). This is why it is considered important to keep investigating how the phenomenon itself is perceived, which is why this thesis will address the understanding of the phenomenon as a part of the research. Moreover, even though Norway is on top of the game worldwide when it comes to equality, the survey conducted in the higher education sector is a reminder that we are yet not immaculate from the counterproductive behaviour at our workplaces. Educational institutions, where education is developed, produced, taught and learned, are places with a social responsibility of teaching, research and public service (Pucciarelli & Kaplan, 2016). Thus, by working on issues such as sexual harassment, education sector can continue to provide value through knowledge creation and dissemination (Pucciarelli & Kaplan, 2016).

This thesis is looking into sexual harassment in the higher education sector with a focus on the preventive work. The following research questions will be analysed:

1. *«How is the phenomenon of sexual harassment understood in the higher education sector by the employees who work closely with it?»*

2. *«How can a complex organisation take preventive measures against the sensitive and unwanted issue of sexual harassment?»*

Theory and Literature

This section will be presenting the theoretical and empirical literature that creates the foundation of this thesis. First, sexual harassment will be explained from different definitions, approaches, and perspectives. Thereafter, the notion of prevention will be presented through a model by Mcdonald et al. (2015), while also emphasising on the importance of policies, procedures and, various training. Lastly, in regard to organisational considerations in terms of sexual harassment prevention, two further concepts are introduced: psychological safety climate and organisational memory. The purpose of this section is to outline and form a framework for the analysis and discussion.

Sexual Harassment

Definition and Understanding

Defining the term 'sexual harassment' has, according to Quick and McFadyen (2017), become one of the most researched areas in the sexual harassment literature. Yet, lack of a clear definition is the main difficulty of studying sexual harassment. There is no agreement on a single definition from any perspective, whether legally, academically or psychologically (Herrera et al., 2018). According to Minnotte and Legerski (2019), reporting of sexual harassment incidents is less likely to occur when there is lack of knowledge and awareness on what sexual harassment is and how it operates in the workplace. Therefore, employees must be able to identify and label sexual harassment accurately when it occurs, in order to enable them to report such incidents. Moreover, even though there is a variation in definitions and in the focus of analyses across studies on sexual harassment, there are some factors that most studies tend to highlight as lying at the core of this phenomenon. These factors are the role of gender, coercion, and unequal power relations (Kensbock et al., 2015; Minnotte & Legerski, 2019). These factors are also consistent through the definitions and understanding of sexual harassment that will be presented in this thesis through inter alia the legal perspective in Norway and the tri-partite model, which classifies the range of sexual harassment behaviours.

A common definition of sexual harassment in the European Union (EU) and in the Nordic countries is as following: "where any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature occurs, with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment" (European Institute for Gender Equality, n.d.). In Norway, sexual harassment is illegal through law and there are mainly two acts that address this issue; the Working Environment Act (2005) and the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act (2017). In

the latter acts' section § 13 the phenomenon is defined as following: "sexual harassment means any form of unwanted sexual attention that has the purpose or effect of being offensive, frightening, hostile, degrading, humiliating or troublesome". The same section §13 also specifies the employer's duty to prevent sexual harassment "employers and managers of organisations and educational institutions shall preclude and seek to prevent harassment and sexual harassment in their area of responsibility". The Working Environment Act (2005) has a main purpose to preserve and secure a working environment that provides a healthy and meaningful working situation for employees (§ 1-1). When it comes to sexual harassment, it is specified in § 4-3 (psychosocial environment) that "employees shall not be subjected to harassment or other improper conduct", making it explicitly prohibited.

Another way to understand sexual harassment is through the tri-partite model of SH (Fitzgerald et al., 1995) which classifies the range of sexual harassment behaviours and identifies three behavioural dimensions: gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention, and sexual coercion. *Gender harassment* refers to obscene verbal and non-verbal behaviours that convey insulting, hostile, and degrading attitudes about gender, identity or sexual orientation (Burn, 2019). *Unwanted sexual attention* involves making suggestive, positive/negative, sexual or romantic advances, both verbal and physical, which are unwanted, unsolicited, unwelcomed and not reciprocated by the targeted person (Burn, 2019; Kabat-Farr & Crumley, 2019). These can include name-calling, physical touching, requests for kiss, date etc. and worse attempted or completed rape (Burn, 2019). Lastly, *sexual coercion* refers to behaviours that coerce individuals to sexually cooperate with perpetrators by them requiring sexual favours as a condition for receiving rewards or benefits related to their job (Burn, 2019; Kabat-Farr & Crumley, 2019). The first two, gender harassment and unwanted sexual attention, can be categorised as behaviours inducing a hostile working environment (Fitzgerald et al., 1995). Whereas the last, sexual coercion, is also derived from the legal perspective and is legally known as *quid pro quo* sexual harassment (Burn, 2019; Kabat-Farr & Crumley, 2019).

Despite the broad spectrum of definition approaches, most scholars argue that sexual harassment is a psychological experience based on a sexually undesired, offensive, and threatening behaviour at the workplace (Cantisano, Domínguez, & Depolo, 2008; Herrera et al., 2018).

Sociocultural Perspectives of Gender and Power

There are also attempts to understand sexual harassment from social-psychological perspectives. Studies highlight the issues of power and gender and how they play out in

various ways to form sexual harassment in particular workplaces and organisational contexts (Minnotte & Legerski, 2019). One definition by Berdahl (2007) says following: "behaviour that derogates, demeans, or humiliates an individual based on that individual's sex" (p. 644). According to Berdahl (2007) sexual harassment is not necessarily sexual based, but rather based on an individual's sex, and that most incidents are driven from power. This perception of power is a sociocultural perspective where sexual harassment is perceived as a tactic for gaining and maintaining power or as a phenomenon aroused from a sense of entitlement felt by powerful people (Burn, 2019). Berdahl's (2007) theory also roots in the idea that sexual harassment occurs as a way to enhance one's own sex-based social status. This brings in another sociocultural perspective from feminist psychology standpoints, which proposes that sexual harassment is rooted in traditional gender norms and roles. From this viewpoint, sexual harassment reinforces the prevailing gender hierarchy idea that heterosexual men have more privilege and power (Holland & Cortina, 2016). With gender and power in mind, Burn (2019) draws on this sociocultural notions from some existing theories and models.

The *vulnerable victim hypotheses* propose that there are certain people who are more disposed to sexual harassment by people with more power than them. These can be people who are low in sociocultural power and status, such as women or racial minorities, and people who have low organisational power, such as those with precarious positions or low ranking in the hierarchy (Burn, 2019; McLaughlin et al., 2012). This hypothesis along with the fact that traditional gender roles gives men higher sociocultural power compared to women, can be used to explain why women are more likely to be harassed and men more likely to be the harassers (Burn, 2019). The *power threat model* suggests that those people who threaten heterosexual men's dominance and traditional hierarchies of power, are more likely to be targets of sexual harassment (Burn, 2019; McLaughlin et al., 2012). These presented hypotheses and model may explain the notion of contrapower sexual harassment, where females with greater power than the male become the targets. Since they have organisational power they are not low in ranking, but they are inferior from a societal perspective (McLaughlin et al., 2012; Tenbrunsel et al., 2019). Thus, their male status is threatened from the societal gender perspective.

The *social power theory* indicate that a harasser draws on several bases of power. So, a person may feel they have the right to demand something from others based on their societal/organisational position or based on their social roles (customer and client). They abuse this legitimate power by believing that their status give them the right to sexually harass (Burn, 2019), and because the subordinate person may also see it as their superior's right, they

may actually feel an obligation to conform with the harassment (Popvich & Warren, 2010). Some supervisors may also have the power to reward (reward power) or punish their targets (coercive power), which can lead to compliance from them. For example, a waitress will tolerate sexual harassment from her customer who will eventually reward her with tips or sales (reward power).

Generally, large power imbalances in a work context supposedly allow sexual harassment to flourish, while in contexts where the employees actually have greater power than the superiors, it is kept to a minimised level (Minnotte & Legerski, 2019).

Prevention

Model of Prevention and Response Strategies

To create a safe and secure workplace is a priority for organisations, which is why attempting to prevent sexual harassment seems as the most obvious way to tackle this issue (Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2018). According to Mcdonald et al. (2015) organisations fail to implement effective strategies at appropriate times. Thus, lack of coordinated and proactive responses along with other negative workplace behaviours give room for negative environments to flourish. This is also how they explain why despite laws prohibiting sexual harassment, it still remains a persistent workplace phenomenon. Mcdonald et al. (2015) refer to sexual harassment as a form of workplace violence. This is why they have delivered a framework with a preventive strategy, which is originated from the violence preventive literature and adopted it to sexual harassment. Their framework is a two-dimensional model where preventive strategies are organised according to their timing (primary, secondary, tertiary), and their functions (message, management, monitoring) (Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2018).

Primary prevention focuses on strategies that are implemented before any event occurs, hence they are to prevent problems from developing and to prevent any initial harm (McDonald et al., 2015). To outline from the violence literature, primary strategies strive to circumvent violence (Cornelius & Resseguie, 2007), remove bases or causes behind it, prevent risk factors associated with violence to develop, and enhance the protective factors (Chamberlain, 2008). The main focus in the primary strategies are policies and training. *Secondary prevention* comprises of immediate responses when faced with sexual harassment. There is mostly a focus on case handling when an incident has occurred and to handle short-term consequences (Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2018; McDonald et al., 2015). *Tertiary prevention* involves long-term responses after having faced sexual harassment. They are designed to deal

with the lasting consequences attempting to reduce the impact of the negative experiences with sexual harassment, restoring health and safety, and prevent further perpetration and victimisation (Chamberlain, 2008; Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2018; Mcdonald et al., 2015).

The second dimension that constitutes of three functions, outlines the key strategies, or key functions/tasks associated with preventive actions (McDonald et al., 2015): *Messages* is how sexual harassment is defined and communicated within the organisation; *Management* includes how the authority figures who can prevent and intervene in sexual harassment prevention may contribute; and *Monitoring* involves strategies that are designed to identify risk factors and assess professional standards and norms throughout the organisation.

Within the three conceptual distinctions in timing, the preventive strategies may not always be mutually exclusive and may overlap in-between the categories. However, the tri-level typology proposes a conceptual clarity to classify between various organisational activities (McDonald et al., 2015).

Mcdonald et al. (2015) created a visual representation, which helps to get a better understanding of the model:
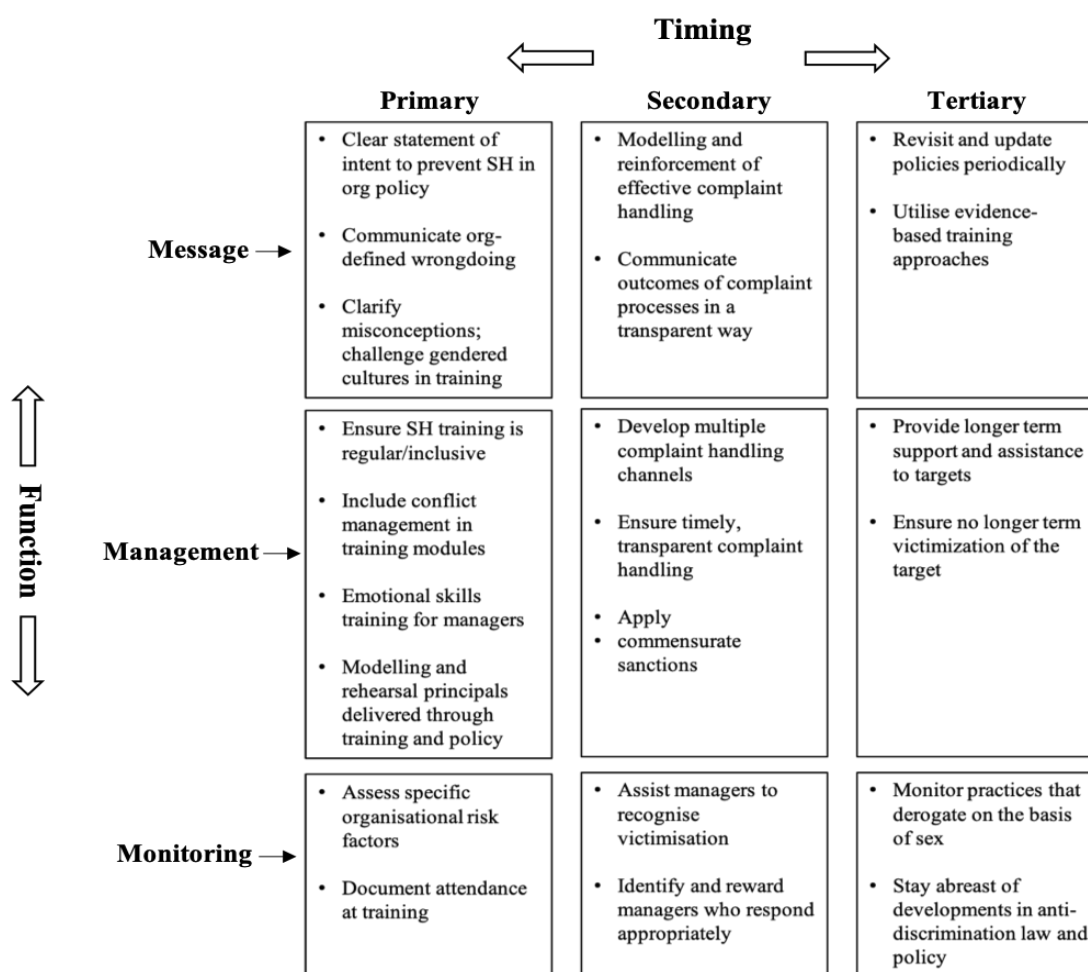
Figure 1: Timing and functions of effective sexual harassment prevention (McDonald et al., 2015)

Policies, Procedures and Training

For the purpose of preventing sexual harassment, official complaint filing procedures, strong anti-harassment policies, and harassment training have been recognised as effective mechanisms (Minnotte & Legerski, 2019). It is recommended to implement easy to understand policies and distribute them in simple language (Johnson et al., 2018). By having effective policies against sexual harassment, organisations ensure transparency and accountability (Kabat-Farr & Crumley, 2019). Organisations with the lowest rates of sexual harassment, proactively develop, broadcast, and enforce sexual harassment policies and procedures (Holland & Cortina, 2016). Policies and procedures also ensure due process for all parties in a sexual harassment case, because the employer has a responsibility and obligation towards all of their employees to maintain a sound working environment and fair treatment, thus they cannot conclude anything based on single allegations (Hudson, 2018). Additionally, some important components of prevention are to pay attention to organisational norms and practices, which can be changed and improved by adopting clear anti-harassment policies and procedures (Burn, 2019). This, especially in shifting strategies to a more systemic level from the individual focus, in order to effectively challenge the status quo in the organisation (McDonald et al., 2015). For example, when there is an issue in the workplace culture, the organisation is more likely to benefit from training for everyone instead of only individual training for the accused (Hudson, 2018). Sexual harassment training can include education about behaviour, policies and procedures of reporting, prohibitions against retaliations, and the responsibilities of leaders, managers and supervisors (Holland & Cortina, 2016). Effective leadership, along with policy environments are considered critical for responding to and preventing sexual harassment (Minnotte & Legerski, 2019). Proper training can aid to minimise sexual harassment by increasing knowledge around the organisational policies and procedures, thus increase reporting, and also create better understanding of what constitutes sexual harassment (Roehling & Huang, 2018). According to Tenbrunsel et al. (2019) training should also include developing and practicing empathy. This is considered especially important for those with power in their roles, as they may have an inability to take other's perspectives (Galinsky et al., 2006) and a diminished ability to show concern and empathy for others (van Kleef et al., 2008). While training may convey which behaviour is acceptable and not acceptable at a workplace, prior research has not shown training to be effective at changing attitudes or behaviours (Bingham & Scherer, 2001; Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2018; Kearney et al., 2004; Lindquist & McKay, 2018; Robb & Doverspike, 2001). Additionally, despite the fact that training increases the understanding of the obvious sexual harassment

behaviours, studies have discovered no effect on the recognition of the more subtle and passive sexual harassment behaviours (Tenbrunsel et al., 2019). Thus, there are also some alternative training approaches being discussed in the literature, such as civility training and bystander interventions (Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2018).

Civility training emphasises the focus on promoting respect more generally in the workplace, contrary to eliminating sexually offensive behaviour (Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2018). Workplace civility is positive behaviour which benefits to preserve, build and reinforce prosocial organisational behaviour and norms of mutual respect at the workplace (Walsh & Magley, 2019). The aim of workplace civility training is to get rid of incivility at the workplace by facilitating positive and respectful interactions in a workplace through knowledge and skill building. There has been found a direct connection between incivility and sexual harassment, more specifically gender harassment, thus, according to Walsh and Magley (2019), working with workplace civility training can also have a direct impact on sexual harassment. Norms of mutual respect can be established by outlining the benefits of respect and civility, highlighting appropriate and inappropriate demeanour and by giving people tools to navigate through challenging interpersonal interactions (Walsh & Magley, 2019). Instead of focusing on what employees and managers should not do, workplace civility training focuses on what employees and managers should do (Walsh & Magley, 2019), which is a positive focus. Moreover, civility training allows the organisation to appeal to all the individuals in the workplace instead of exclusively targeting sexual harassment, which can lead to more receptive and motivated employees and avoid resistance that can be met by interventions (Feldblum & Lipnic, 2016; Walsh & Magley, 2019).

Bystander interventions is another way of encouraging pro-social behaviour by bystanders (McDonald et al., 2016). The recent focus on this approach emphasises the role of the bystander and addresses bystander intervention before, during and after incidents (McMahon, & Banyard, 2012; Quick & McFadyen, 2017). To define it, bystander interventions include a focus on how individuals might intervene in order to prevent, protect or reduce harm to others, when they witness or hear about sexual harassment incidents (Powell, 2011). A witness has the potential to confront and halt a harasser, report the event, and support the target (Bowes-Sperry & O'Leary-Kelly, 2005). Training related to bystander interventions is encouraged in terms of making sexual harassment a sense of collective responsibility through recognition and reporting (Lipnic, 2016). Bowes-Sperry and O'Leary-Kelly (2005) developed a classification comprised of four categories of intervention behaviours based on two levels (low/high) and two dimensions (involvement and

immediacy); the level of involvement in a sexual harassment event (direct vs. indirect) and the level of immediacy (immediate action vs. later action). For example, high involvement and high immediacy actions require to take an active and identifiable role, such as publicly name the behaviour as sexual harassment (Burn, 2019; McDonald et al., 2016). Opposed to this, low involvement and low immediacy action take place when the bystander supports the harassed person at a later time, an example is providing social support behind the scenes (Burn, 2019; McDonald et al., 2016). This model was empirically studied by McDonald et al. (2016) who discovered four contextual key features that influenced the likelihood of bystander interventions to take place, these are: identification with and similarity to the target (e.g. female colleagues may identify more strongly with female targets), experience and anticipations of group-level sanctions (e.g. fear of reprisals for intervening), workplace norms (e.g. indication of tolerance of sexual harassment), inaction or co-participation in sexualised ridicule (e.g. managers and co-workers co-participating in the harassing conduct). Bystander involvement is argued to be driven by workplace culture and the tolerance level of sexual harassment (McMahon & Banyard, 2012). Thus, bystander interventions' communicating role plays a part in changing the cultural, as well as the group and organisational context that supports sexual harassment (Ryan & Wessel, 2012), particularly when it is implemented as a group effort (Burn, 2019). In order to change this culture, colleagues and peers must feel empowered and comfortable to be able to intervene and speak up in such issues (Kabat-Farr & Crumley, 2019). Moreover, bystander interventions are considered to be one of the most promising sexual harassment interventions (Tenbrunsel et al., 2019). However, Burn (2019) points out that such interventions begin with people analysing the situation, whether it is intervention appropriate or not. Thus bystander interventions may be more likely to be applied if the ambiguity around people's understandings and definitions of sexual harassment is reduced, for them to actually understand and associate a behaviour to sexual harassment (Burn, 2019). Furthermore, it is argued that identifying sexual harassment is not enough, there must also be a sense of individual responsibility (Burn, 2019), which can be increased by having organisational role expectations for taking actions through policies (Bowes-Sperry & O'Leary-Kelly, 2005). According to Tenbrunsel et al. (2019) several American universities have already implemented a policy to require mandatory interventions from employees, which may support to clarify role expectations.

The combination of strong established anti-harassment policies, training and encouragement of bystander interventions, are thought of as initial steps to improve the organisational culture in order to decrease sexual harassment (Kabat-Farr & Crumley, 2019).

However, strong support from leaders and managers must be supplemented for them to be effective (Burn, 2019).

Psychological Safety Climate

While organisations are principally concerned with best practices for the design and implementation of more effective sexual harassment training, Walker et al. (2019) argue that organisations need to focus on organisational climate. They particularly emphasise psychological safety climate to create a safe and comfortable context in regard to sexual harassment behaviours. Schneider, et al. (1998) distinguish between two climates; specific climates, which are climates "for something", such as customer service or sexual harassment; and foundation climates, referring to collectively shared perceptions about broader foundational issues that sustain work (Wallace et al., 2006), such as psychological safety climate (Walker et al., 2019). Hence, specific climates keep a narrower scope and focus, while foundational climates are of a broader nature (Walker et al., 2019). Psychological safety is explained as the belief that one is safe at work when speaking up, thus allowing employees to operate at work without having the fear of repercussions by providing them with the feeling of security (Walker et al., 2019). It is claimed that foundation climates can enable more specific climates to develop (Schneider et al., 1998; Wallace et al., 2006). Hence, Walker et al. (2019) suggest that psychological safety climate can enable for other specific climates to emerge in regard to sexual harassment. They propose the specific climate of voice and sexual harassment. Voice climate may aid to express and address issues around sexual harassment that can cause harm to the organisation (Liang, et al., 2012). Additionally, sexual harassment climate may capture the shared perceptions of sexual harassment intolerance (Rubino et al., 2018). According to Walker et al. (2019), in order to develop beneficial training to reduce and prevent sexual harassment, an increased sense of safety that improves sexual harassment climate at a workplace is crucial.

Moreover, Walker et al. (2019) also propose to improve some contextual factors related to psychological safety in order to increase psychological safety for employees. Examples of such contextual factors are leaders and colleagues. Positive leader relations, as well as colleague support, have been indicated to be positively related to psychological safety (Frazier et al., 2017). An inclusive and safe climate can be established by leaders when they display a supportive and caring behaviour, and condemn mistreatment (Walker et al., 2019). Furthermore, co-workers can foster psychological safety by creating social norms which creates a level of expectations for behaviour, thus explicitly unwelcome mistreatment and welcome reporting and sanctioning of it (Walker et al., 2019).

Walker et al. (2019) suggest that organisational training should extend to include creating a safe context for employees to feel safe when reporting undesirable behaviours, which can further be used to develop targeted training for that specific organisation. It is further proposed that leaders must demonstrate concern and care, and clearly communicate organisational policies around sexual harassment (Walker et al., 2019).

Organisational Memory

Organisations do not operate in isolation from their societal context and the institution of university has a close relationship with practically all the layers of society, especially acting as a link between other organisations (Feiz et al., 2019). Faculty members in higher education are considered to play an effective role in creating and changing knowledge among people, hence in order to achieve university goals, knowledge sharing among members is found as a key element (Feiz et al., 2019). Knowledge sharing is understood as a process where employees share their knowledge and information throughout the organisation so that it is mutually exchanged and ultimately create a new form of knowledge (Bartol & Srivastava, 2002). Knowledge sharing is considered important in order to transform personal knowledge into organisational knowledge (Feiz et al., 2019). Knowledge sharing is considered as a key dimension of organisational learning, which is understood as a process where organisations learn, producing a change in organisational models that maintain or improve outcomes (Lara & Salas-Vallina, 2017). The sharing of individual knowledge, which is thereafter spread by communicating it towards groups and teams and absorbed by the organisation, enables the organisation's learning. Hence, this learning can proceed the competence building processes required in an organisation (Muskat & Deery, 2017). Organisational memory is the outcome of the learning process of an organisation, thus it is here all the accumulated knowledge is preserved over time and information is stored, retrieved and processed as new knowledge (Levitt & March, 1988; Walsh & Ungson, 1991). Organisational knowledge is boosted, developed and extended by the organisational memory's ability to merge sporadic and different knowledge (Feiz et al., 2019). According to Langenmayr and Baecker (2016) organisations conserve experiences in the memory through organisational routines, which includes forms, rules, procedures, strategies, frameworks, cultures, knowledge among others. These routines exist in various systematic structures within an organisation and can be differentiated by subcultures, subgroups, and subunits (Levitt & March, 1988), which applies into higher education due to how institutions are organised. Accordingly, there is not one single organisational memory, but rather several levels of memory (Langenmayr, 2016). Not all routines permanently stay in the organisation, thus organisational memory stores those

parts that are frequently used and therefore becomes easily accessible, while the parts that are seldom used, are easily forgotten (Langenmayr, 2016). Routines represent organisational memory, which by the help of these routines stores and retrieves experiences and knowledge, regardless of the individuals who have been a part of it (Langenmayr, 2016). One prominent theoretical model of memory is Walsh and Ungson's (1991) 'storage bin' model, describing organisational memory as a 'storage bin' filled with information from an organisation's past to be used in the present (Walsh & Ungson, 1991). It is theoretically illustrating how experiences and knowledge are to be transferred by organisations, although the staff may change (Langenmayr, 2016). The model consists of three phases: acquisition, retention, and retrieval. The *acquisition* phase principally concerns information about decisions made and problems solved, and suggests the journalist's six questions of who, what, when, where, why and how is information stored? (Muskat & Deery, 2017). *Retention* is the core phase of the model, where the acquired information is stored until the time of need and thus it is retrieved (Langenmayr, 2016). It is in this phase the storage bins are presented, four internal and one external: individuals, culture, transformations, ecology, and external archives. The final phase of *retrieval* is where information is retrieved, which can be done through an automatic, intuitive decision-making, or in a controlled environment through previously shared procedures and practices (Langenmayr & Baecker, 2016; Walsh & Ungson, 1991).

Method

In this section I will be presenting the steps that were taken in order to answer the research questions of this thesis: *1. How is the phenomenon of sexual harassment understood in the higher education sector by the employees who work closely with it», 2. How can a complex organisation take preventive measures against the sensitive and unwanted issue of sexual harassment?*. Initially, I will explain how this research project became relevant to work with. Then I will be going into the choice of a qualitative approach, and thereafter more specifically into IPA as the preferred method of analysis. Further, there will be detailed information about my data collection, before describing how I conducted an IPA analysis of my data material. Finally, there is a reflexivity part about ethical considerations.

The Birth of The Research Project

Sexual harassment has had an immense recent focus in the world and not least in Norway (Sletteland, 2018), besides it has been a burning issue notably for the past three years, since the movement of #MeToo in 2017. This project is a result of the combination of this extreme awareness around the subject and the researcher's interest in topics closely related to workplace and societal issues. There is a lot of media attention to this matter, however relatively little research that can be found in the higher education sector, particularly in the Scandinavian countries (Sørum, 2018). During the second semester of my master's program in spring 2018, I was given the opportunity to have an internship in HR at one of the educational institutions in Norway. Through this internship the relevance of this topic in the higher education sector was brought to my attention. For instance, I became aware of the national survey on harassment and bullying in the higher education sector that was being conducted at that time. After having conversations with some key persons, I set my mind to explore the phenomenon of sexual harassment in the higher education sector. The initial thought was to explore the phenomena from the perspectives of those who have experienced it, however I changed my mind due to the sensitivity of the subject and the complexity of talking to those who have experienced sexual harassment. This decision was additionally based on the fact that there is only a certain amount of time to work on a master's thesis, the more sensitivity, the more time would it require on the pre-approvals of the research project. Thus, through some guidance, I changed the direction into preventive work and to the understanding of sexual harassment in the higher education sector. The aim of this thesis is to analyse the phenomenon of sexual harassment in the context of higher education, with a focus on the preventive work.

Approach and Design

Qualitative Design

The very first step after the project was decided was to select the methodological approach. The intention of this research was to explore and understand a phenomenon, which indicated the research project towards an exploratory design. An exploratory design is commonly adapted when the researcher is interested in gaining insight and understanding about a certain focus, where there is no clear hypothesis about the outcomes and little previous knowledge about the subject (Ringdal, 2007). As earlier mentioned, sexual harassment in higher education is a less researched area, thus a qualitative research approach was clearly most suitable. The exploratory nature of this approach allows to explore a phenomenon through its complexity and search for answers such as why and where a problem has occurred (Svartdal, 2009), as opposed to quantitative which is characterised as explanatory (Ringdal, 2007). Through a qualitative approach the researcher intends to scrutinise the single human being, seek to understand the person and produce knowledge about the nature of experience and/or actions, including social processes (Brinkmann & Tanggaard, 2012; Levitt et al., 2017). Overall, the aim is to produce a holistic understanding of rich, contextual, and generally unstructured, non-numeric data (Ponelis, 2015). Qualitative research is an iterative analysis process that attempts to catch and generate people's experiences, meanings and sense making of their world (Levitt et al., 2017), which leads the researcher into a deep and thorough overview through relatively few research subjects. Comparatively, the quantitative approach aims to create broad and generalisable results (Bell et al., 2018). Another difference between the quantitative and qualitative approach is that the former seeks for consistency between theory and facts from an outsider perspective, creating objectivity, while the latter seeks an insider perspective, creating subjectivity. Additional important perspective of qualitative research is the inductive stance of data collection (Smith, 2004). The inductive character for this thesis means that the theoretical framework will be derived from the data collected and not the other way around (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). With the purpose of gaining inside perspective into the higher education sector and explore attitudes, meaning and sensemaking in this study, a qualitative approach seemed to be the most adequate research method. More specifically, the qualitative analysis method known as Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

One particular qualitative analysis method is Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). This methodology is considered particularly useful to examine topics that are complex, ambiguous and emotionally laden (Smith & Osborn, 2015), such as the topic of sexual harassment. IPA draws upon the epistemological position based in: phenomenology; the study of experience, hermeneutics; the theory of interpretation, and idiography; concerning the particular (Smith et al., 2009). The main goal of IPA is to explore the details of participants' personal lived experiences and how they make sense of the experiences within their personal and social world (Smith, 2004), which is the phenomenological construct. IPA is concerned with individual, personal perceptions of objects or events, where the researcher attempts to make sense of their world through own conceptions (Smith & Osborn, 2015). This dynamic process between the participant and researcher is recognised as a double-hermeneutic; while the participants are trying to make sense of their personal and social world, the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world (Smith, 2004; Smith & Osborn, 2015). Hence, through IPA the researcher is trying to understand the world from the point of view of the participants. Since this research paper is looking into how employees in the higher education sector understand and experience the phenomenon of sexual harassment in their personal and social world, and their perceptions on the preventive work, IPA is an applicable choice of analysis method. The third epistemological construct of IPA, idiography, is concerned with examining individual perspectives in detail and having an in-depth analytic focus on the particular cases in turn (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). In other words, it is about committing full attention to the analysis of one case, achieving a degree of closure before moving on the next and then attempt to cross analyse the cases through more general claims (Smith, 2004; Smith & Osborn, 2015). There will be more elaboration on the analysis conducted in this research thesis a little later in the method section, explicitly under the headline of *IPA analysis.*

Data Collection

Interview

The most commonly used technique of data collection in qualitative research are interviews, which are recommended for the researcher who is seeking to acquire knowledge about the participants' understanding of the world and their experiences (Taylor, 2005). The exploratory nature of interviews that allows the interviewee to share, describe and interpret their perspectives, proposes a uniqueness to the research. This is important in order to acknowledge the individuality, humanity and uniqueness of each individual participant

(Taylor, 2005). Prior to the research gathering process an interview guide was developed, which will be elaborated on in the next paragraph. The interview guide was also sent to NSD (Norwegian Centre for Research Data) for ethical approval, along with the project description. The most frequently used interview technique is the semi-structured interview format, which is also described as an excellent format for IPA (Smith et al., 2009). Some advantages of semi-structured interviews include that it has been found to be successful in enabling reciprocity between the interviewer and participant (Galletta, 2013), it allows the interviewer to improvise follow-up questions based on the responses (Polit & Beck, 2010) and creates a space for the individual verbal expressions of the participants (Kallio et al., 2016). The questions were developed with previous knowledge in mind, both through theoretical research and experience-based knowledge. This goes in line with the fact that semi-structured interviews require a certain level of prerequisite knowledge (Kallio et al., 2016).

Interview Guide. The interview guide was developed with the help and guidance of my supervisor who suggested developing the interview guide by dividing it into main themes, this way a focused structure is developed (Taylor, 2005). Although the interview guide is not to be strictly followed, it allows to provide the participants with guidance on what they can talk about, as well as creating homogeneity in the type of information collected from the participants (Kallio et al., 2016). For this reason, I also added several prompt questions so that I could remember important questions to ask and did not forget them due to nervousness, especially during the very first interviews. I considered it to be helpful for my own sake. Themes that were covered in the interview guide are 'sexual harassment defined and status', 'preventive work' and '#MeToo'. The purpose of the first theme was to get their understanding of the phenomenon out and to have them talk about the status on sexual harassment in their respective institutions, such as existing policies. The second theme covered questions about preventive work in the higher education sector, both at their individual institutions and in general. #MeToo was included for obvious reasons, however it was deliberately decided to be placed near the end of the interview, so the participants were not to be influenced by it in their answers. Nevertheless, #Metoo was always brought up by the participants throughout the interview anyway. The interview guide also included two different cases to discuss. They were included with the intention of creating an objective sensitivity towards the topic so that the participants could discuss with as less bias as possible. And also with the intention to put the issue of sexual harassment in a practical setting for them to discuss. Case one is about verbal sexual harassment where a woman feels harassed, but her immediate manager fails to take the complaint seriously and rather ask her to try and

talk to the harasser herself. This eventually leads her to file a police report instead of taking it any further in her workplace (Appendix 4). This case was a general workplace case where the intention was to get the participants to talk about failed case handling. Case two is targeted towards higher education sector and is about non-verbal sexual harassment. It illustrates a PhD candidate's struggles with her supervisor's inappropriate behaviour. When she tries to complain, it ends up with the faculty offering her a new start with a new supervisor instead of giving him any consequences (Appendix 4). The intention here was to get a contextual related case about something that could happen at any of the participants' workplaces. And also, to let them speak freely with the example of a conflict through a case instead of having them to talk about their particular workplace in a hypothetical conflict. These cases will be referred to later in the thesis, therefore they will be available in the appendices for a more detailed reading. Lastly, I had some questions I categorised as 'reflecting questions' that were the result of my personal curiosity. The interview guide is in Norwegian and can be reviewed in the appendices at the end of this thesis (Appendix 3).

Participants

The recruitment process began as soon as the research project was approved. The participants that were approached were based on the criteria that they had some experience working with sexual harassment at their respective institutions (e.g., HR-personnel), or that they had some management role were there was a possibility of coming across or handling an issue involving the particular topic. The first step taken was to contact HR-directors from different institutions, as well as people from my own network through the internship, and send them the information of my project. They were respectfully asked to forward my information to, or provide me with the information of, the relevant people to participate in my research project. This way I was able to have a first-hand contact with any potential participant. The recruitment process can be categorised as a snowball-sampling method, as those who replied to my requests of participation were also asked to provide contact information of other applicable participants. Some participants were even kind enough to suggest possible participants to me without being asked. Finally, interviews were conducted with six participants altogether with an age range from 39 – 64. Five of them works in HR and have directly or indirectly worked with the preventive side of sexual harassment at their educational institution, or even in other related committees out in the sector. Two of the participants are managers on the faculty/institute level and gave the research project a slightly different perspective as opposed to only those five who were fairly knowledgeable about the topic and the preventive work. Due to anonymity and confidentiality reasons their gender is

kept undisclosed. Additionally, to keep the part of the analysis to a personal level for myself and the reader, they have been given fictional female names instead of being referred to through numbered labels.

Interview Procedure

The interviews always began with asking the participants if they have read the information sheet that was provided to them in the initial email. A notable evaluation here is that all the six participants had merely skimmed through the information sheet and wanted to take part because they believed in the importance of the topic of sexual harassment. This is an example of how certain issues, such as sexual harassment, draws attention regardless of their relevance or direction, exclusively because of their significance all around in society. Before conducting the interviews, they were asked to sign the consent form for a formal agreement on participation and give their consent to be recorded. They were also handed a hardcopy of the information sheet to keep. The interviews were recorded using a recording device lent from NTNU, subsequently the recorded files were saved on an encrypted USB flash drive. The participants were guided about the interview process by being informed about the visible recording device and which themes that will be covered. Before embarking into the real themes of the interview, the session started with some general questions about the participants and their work in order to get a comfortable start, especially due to the sensitive nature of the topic.

Transcripts

Once all the interviews were completed began the process of transcription. In IPA, the transcription level is generally on the semantic level, meaning that one should see all the words spoken and be aware of the noteworthy pauses (Smith, 2015). Therefore, the interviews were transcribed verbatim, while actions such as laughter were put in asterisks (e.g., *laughing*). Small pauses were indicated by two dots, a little longer pauses with three dots and the longest pauses were either put as "*pause*" or "*thinking*" depending on the reason behind the break, which was explicable for me by actively listening to the conversations. Additionally, square brackets ([ ]) were used to add further questions or comments by me if they were interrelated into the continuing answer of the participants.

IPA Analysis Procedure

Although there is no correct or firm method for how to carry out an IPA analysis (Smith et al., 2009), this particular analysis was conducted by following some recommended steps for the qualitative analysis approach by Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014). Initially, it is recommended to read and re-read the transcripts so that the researcher can immerse into the

data and become familiar with the participants one at a time. While reading, the researcher annotates interesting or significant exploratory comments, also called coding. I decided to print out each interview in different tables consisting of two rows, with the interview in the left row and an empty margin on the right for the exploratory comments. After reading and noting on paper, I moved on to the software NVivo to code my exploratory comments digitally, which also shortened the list of codes somewhat as I got a second look. According to Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) using a software for coding qualitative data, researchers may feel more confident to end up with a simpler list of themes and subthemes, due to the easier way of linking extracts to respective themes. Additionally, by moving on to a software to do the same step once again digitally, I was required to read my transcripts one more time, which is in line with the first recommendation of reading them multiple times.

When all the initial coding is done for each interview, the coding is supposed to reflect the original data material (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Therefore, in the next step the researcher leaves the transcripts, and goes onto transforming the exploratory comments into emergent themes, which is a mere higher level of abstraction. I began with clustering the initial codes into emergent themes for one interview at a time, as it is recommended to focus on each transcript before moving on to the next throughout the whole process of the analysis. According to Smith and Osborn (2015), afterwards the researcher has to get a sense of the connections between the emergent themes. To have them visually organised for myself, I made an empty table for each interview, meaning six different tables. Subsequently, when I finished clustering together the initial coding into emergent themes, I placed the emergent themes for each interview in their particular table. An example of this is available in the appendix (Appendix 5: Table 1). Moreover, I enlisted the apparent connected themes together in different rows, by grouping them this way I was also able to get an analytic and theoretical ordering. This was also done one dataset at a time, as well as with an organisational psychological conceptualisation in mind. This is the stage where the researcher is applying the hermeneutic trait of IPA by playing an active role and interpreting just through the initial codes, without the transcripts. These codes are the part of the whole, the interviews, therefore the whole is interpreted through the part (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). However, due to the iterative nature of this analysis method, the original transcripts are regularly checked upon while working with the emergent themes (Smith & Osborn, 2015). While the researcher is making sense of what the participants are saying through their interpretative resources, they also have to make sure that sense-making is in line with what was actually said (Smith & Osborn, 2015).

When all the six tables were completed with categorising the emergent themes, each table was comprised of some superordinate and subordinate themes, hence each participant was analysed. Next step involves connecting the dataset, therefore all the six tables with the clustered emergent themes were subsequently put together to seek for connections. This led to some similar emergent themes to go together, while others were rejected as they did not fit well with the emerging structure, nor were they rich enough in evidence within the transcripts. Finally, the emergent themes were combined into one table of themes that was produced as the final result for this analysis (Appendix 5: Table 2). It consisted of three superordinate themes and their respective subordinate themes, which were represented by the final coded emergent themes. In addition to work with NVivo, having a visual result in the form of a table, helped me to keep focus on the selected coding and the quotes when writing up the analysis.

Ethical Considerations

This research was approved by NSD - Norwegian Centre for Research Data (Appendix 1), prior to any data collection. Once it was approved I began recruiting participants who were always asked to participate through a first-hand contact, even if they were recommended by others. When requested to participate in the research they were sent the information sheet with the aim of the study, they voluntary participations, and preservation of anonymity and confidentiality (Appendix 2). The consent form (Appendix 2) was always signed prior to beginning the interview. The audio records were saved in an encrypted USB flash drive, which were deleted once the thesis was finished. All the interviews were transcribed by me and the transcripts were saved with participant numbers. The participants were given fictional female names in order to keep the anonymised and personal at the same time. Initially, I planned to add all the relevant quotes in a table and attach them in the appendices for the sake of transparency. However, after talking with my supervisor it was concluded that this could jeopardise the anonymity of the participants, and the better design was to leave them out.

Analysis

In this section I will be presenting the key findings from the IPA analysis. The interviews were conducted with the purpose of looking into sexual harassment in the higher education sector, focusing on the preventive work. As previously mentioned, the findings of this thesis aim to answer these following research questions: *1. How is the phenomenon of sexual harassment understood in the higher education sector by the employees who work closely with it? and 2. How can a complex organisation take preventive measures against the sensitive and unwanted issue of sexual harassment?*

Introduction of Findings

The findings indicate that the understanding of sexual harassment is not perfectly aligned with all the participants. Some of them referred to the law, while others contemplate on the term on its own. The words *'power'* and *'gender'* were mentioned by pretty much all the participants in some way or other. This implies that the importance of these terms is a common understanding for the participants perceptions, which is why they are part of the key findings. Moreover, #MeToo has become a perception that is associated to sexual harassment in any context and it would have been inevitable for it to not become significant in regard to the findings. A key finding pointed out by the participants is seemingly the impact #MeToo has had in creating a new understanding of sexual harassment. Support and awareness are key cultural points that have appeared to the surface through the narratives of the participants. These cultural points are both implicitly and explicitly referred to by the participants as they talk about what is needed and what they find important in order to work for a better work environment, in regard to sexual harassment. With this, it is implied that the cultural preventive work is suggested to be a principal aspect to work with in order to prevent the occurrence of sexual harassment. Therefore, the findings look at support and awareness as the suggested tools required for extensive preventive work for a higher education institution. Furthermore, the findings also imply that in order to take preventive measures there must be some established organisational foundations, for instance in the form of systems. The participants frequently mention *'policies and procedures'* as part of the system and refer to the systematic work in some way or other related to them. Thus, their importance has become a key part of the findings. The participants speak of the dilemma and complexity that emerge for leaders and managers when working with sexual harassment. The importance of training and support is considered as key findings, and in some sense, it is also indicated to work on learning and remembering from experience of the organisation. Besides the leaders, the participants also emphasise on creating a safe climate for the individuals of an organisation,

especially those that are part of such sensitive cases. Surprisingly, participants also brought attention to those individuals who end up being accused for sexual harassment. As the working individuals are significant parts of an organisation, to ensure them the safety, care and a sound working environment is indicated as an essential part for the proposed organisational foundation. The key findings of the proposed organisational foundations are suggested as significant factors required in order to create the organisational ability of working with preventive measures.

Prior to presenting the themes, I will be presenting the context of the thesis, from the participants viewpoints. It is considered significant due to the fact that this research was conducted in this specific context of the higher education sector. Additionally, the complex nature of this sector was also stressed on by the participants, which enhances the importance of the context. I will be summarising some of the participants' thoughts on their workplace from the interviews.

The analysis is presented through three recurring superordinate themes, with up to three subordinate themes each:

- o **Perceptions of sexual harassment** – *Sexual harassment as a concept, Mechanisms behind sexual harassment, A new understanding after #Metoo*
- o **The tools of prevention** – *The tool of support, The tool of awareness*
- o **Organisational foundations for prevention** – *The systematic work foundation, Leadership - training and support, The safe climate*

Sexual Harassment in Higher Education Sector – The Complex Organisation

When it comes to working with sensitive issues like sexual harassment, the participants in this research consider their workplace distinctive in comparison to other work sectors. Although, it is simply a workplace like any other, there are some distinct characteristics they pointed out that makes a higher education institution slightly different and that are important to consider when working with sexual harassment. Foremost, it is the group of PhD candidates. Besides being in a dependency relation with their supervisor, PhD candidates also have the dilemma that their supervisor is sort of their manager in the academic sense. However, they do not have any responsibility from the personnel perspective towards their PhD candidates. So, if a PhD candidate happens to experience any unwanted behaviour from their supervisors, they might lack an immediate manager, or a close relationship with someone of authority at their respective workplace, who can support them. Additionally, speaking up against their supervisor may put them in a risky position where they may

experience reprisal, in worst case they can lose their career. This can for instance be because their supervisor is the only person who can guide that particular topic, or simply because the supervisor is in a position to affect the academic future of the PhD candidate. One participant also pointed out that the PhD candidates can end up having different positions in the system. They can be registered as both 'employees' and 'students' depending on the nature of their registration, which creates a discrepancy and ambiguity of their official role at their institution. Hence, they are a vulnerable group and easy targets for experiencing sexual harassment and need a focus when it comes to prevention.

Another distinctiveness of the higher education institution that was pointed out is that there are different practices. It is emphasised by the participants that there is a variation in how sexual harassment cases are approached in such a large and complex organisation. This is especially challenging due to the way education institutions are organised comprising of several faculties and numerous institutes, which all have their own practices. So, even though sexual harassment in higher education is not a frequent occurrence issue, there are variations in practices for the few occurrences. Thus, in such a large workplace sexual harassment may just become inevitable and need better preventive actions.

IPA Analysis

Superordinate Theme 1: Perceptions of Sexual Harassment

The first superordinate theme of this analysis *'perceptions of sexual harassment'* is mostly related to the first thesis question and is sorting out the understanding of the phenomenon through the participants' thoughts. These thoughts are results of direct questions about what they put into the term sexual harassment, as well as my indirect interpretations of their reflections throughout the interviews. In order to get a wholesome picture of the phenomenon I have managed to select three subordinate themes to illustrate the findings of this theme. The first subordinate theme *sexual harassment as a concept* grasps the individual explanations of the term in regard to the participants' own understandings. The grey areas of sexual harassment, associations to the law, and the importance of subjective experience are some continuous factors under this subtheme. The second subordinate theme *mechanisms behind sexual harassment* considers some of the factors behind the occurrence of sexual harassment. Gender and power imbalances are reoccurring aspects throughout the interviews, where power imbalances are specifically addressed in relation to the context of higher education. Finally, since 2017 sexual harassment has almost become synonymous to #MeToo, making #MeToo impossible not to emerge as an important factor. The last subordinate theme *a new*

understanding after #MeToo is the result of participants' constant reference to the movement. This theme is especially related to the movement's important role of getting sexual harassment back to the agenda and bringing awareness to the range of sexual harassment behaviour. It is also addressed in regard to the impact on the society, and more importantly at the workplace. It also links back to the first subtheme in the sense that some participants mention how the understanding of sexual harassment changed due to the #MeToo movement.

Sexual Harassment as a Concept

All the participants were asked how they define the term sexual harassment, which they tried to explain by different reflections, while some of them in particular by involving the legal perception. In this next extract, Anita is figuring out the severity of sexual harassment by comparing it to general harassment through a legal understanding, "I think part of what goes under the concept of harassment may still be within the limits of what is legal and not punishable but if it is sexual abuse then it is punishable". According to Anita, harassment alone is a term that does not necessarily classify as something punishable. In contrast to sexual harassment, which is always punishable by law. The aspect of law is also brought up by Deniz in the extracts below:

...harassment definitions are almost the same, but when it comes to sexual harassment the legislation is in some way stricter, or one can be more strictly condemned. Ehh should not say less but for example harassment then there is a requirement that one should have harassed someone, for example repetitively recurring, when it comes to sexual harassment it can be enough with a single case so that it somehow shows how we legally and lawfully perceive the severity.

(Deniz)

She elaborates further:

...so when it comes to harassment in the working life it is something one is, by the law should be protected against through both the working environment act and equality and anti-discrimination act, so if it occurs in the working life then it is serious.

(Deniz)

Deniz is making sense of the definition by talking about the legal severity of sexual harassment in comparison to general harassment. Her perception of the severity is understood

through the lens of law. She is also drawing lines to the working life, where a person is additionally protected by the specific legislations related to work. This same notion is in fact also represented by Anita:

> *when you experience it in the working life it is covered by the working environment act in addition and the employer has a responsibility so that you are not be exposed to it, we do not have that arrangement in our spare time to say so.*
>
> (Anita)

In addition to the regulations of work, Anita is also mentioning the responsibility an employer has to protect their employees, especially in cases like these. According to her, that is a privilege we do not have in our private lives, hence another factor that reinforce the severity of sexual harassment.

While some participants put an emphasis on the legislation when talking about sexual harassment as a term, others put their emphasis on the nature of the term. In the extract below, Natasha describes sexual harassment in her own understanding:

> *...eh sexual harassment can be in my opinion both verbal, physical and ehh, mainly verbal and physical I think. Physical is that you are actually molested, there is someone who comes inside your intimate zone, verbally can be comment on body and gender and sex and different things.*
>
> (Natasha)

Natasha is explicitly explaining sexual harassment as a physical and verbal act. She is also making sure that this is according to her opinion. Notably, she is mentioning the verbal aspect of it, most likely due to the general tendency to merely think of, or unintentionally perceive, any unwanted harassment of sexual nature as something physical. Other participants also attempt to explain sexual harassment in categories of *'physical', 'non-verbal' or 'verbal'.* According to Marte, the most common form of sexual harassment at work is the verbal harassment:

> *...sexual harassment in work life it can be very verbal maybe first and foremost. Also you also have some, more than you might wish for, more than one actually think about I think,*

that goes on the more physical, that often goes in connection with you, have it in connection with having seminars that have some kind of ending that contains alcohol for example, or that you have a work travel which involves accommodation, so then that everyday sexual harassment I think may be a lot more verbal then.

(Marte)

She mentions the physical forms of harassment that can occur in specific scenarios and situations that creates some blurred lines among co-workers, but relates the most common, everyday sexual harassment to the verbal form. The verbal form is also implicitly associated with the grey areas of sexual harassment by several participants in their narratives. Continuing with Marte, she brings up this issue as she mentions the grey areas while talking about differences of theory and practice related to working with sexual harassment:

I think a lot of the challenge lies in the grey areas. Because some eh that somebody touches someone on their breasts at the Christmas party it's not like, it's not so much to wonder in a way I think so, but it's that to look at those stairs of severity that's where I think the challenge comes. Ehh and it may be that because it can be difficult to tell about something that is kind of like ahh was it that, wasn't it that, I don't really know, a little unsure, it was unpleasant so. There I probably think there is something there about theory and practice, that somehow after all the law is quite clear like that but still there is also a threshold of what can be considered harassment ehm sexual harassment, so I think a lot lies there.

(Marte)

She is describing how easy it is to call out physical sexual harassment due to its explicit nature. However, there are those cases of uncertainties and insecurities around a certain behaviour that makes it difficult to pinpoint whether it was sexual harassment or not. This is referred to as the grey areas of sexual harassment, which according to her creates a discrepancy in understanding sexual harassment from the perspective of law and in real situations. Meaning, even though the situation is uncomfortable for the individual, there may not be enough grounds to define the act or behaviour as sexual harassment. Thus, it creates a subjective uncertainty of defining the issue of sexual harassment. The grey areas of sexual harassment are also brought up by Anita:

...it may be that someone is standing too close to you and if someone does so many times you may experience it as harassment until someone takes you on the thigh, which is or worse, which is much clearly not ok. So, then that is inside that harassment block then, I think there is like this continuity scale from that something is clearly wrong, because there is a lot that is a bit like grey zone cases, and I think they are the hardest to deal with many times, both for those who are exposed to it and for us who are working on building good systems for prevention.

<div align="right">(Anita)</div>

Her remarks complement the aforementioned as she is talking about how some behaviours can easier be perceived as sexual harassment due to the clarity of the act, such as involuntarily being touched on the thigh. She attempts to define sexual harassment on a severity scale with explicit sexual harassment and grey areas of harassment on opposite sides. While doing so, she also conveys the concern of how the grey areas make such cases difficult to handle. Not only is it a psychological weight on the person who has experienced it, but it also makes the preventive work even more challenging with the ambiguity involved.

Another important factor that was brought up by the participants was the aspect of subjective experience. This is illustrated by Natasha in the following extract: "Then I think it is very important that the person who experiences it is the one who should tell one shall never underestimate the subjective experience, the own experience, you must never underestimate it". She continues in another extract:

It is individual, it's the subjective experience that is most important. If you think it's okay then it's okay, if you don't think it's okay. But it may be too easy to say it this way and because if you don't think it is okay, but are not able to tell, then it is an abuse.

<div align="right">(Natasha)</div>

She is explicitly pointing out the very importance of the subjective experience and how, according to her, the whole situation depends on the person at the receiving end. In the second extract, she calls attention to the difficulty a person can go through when affected by an unwanted situation, such as the struggle of speaking up for themselves. Silence does give people the opportunity to question someone's accusations, especially if the behaviour was an ongoing event for a period of time. Natasha specify that fact that it is easier said than done,

which is why the subjective experience may never be underestimated when investigating such cases. The subjective experience is also brought up by Deniz:

...and another important dimension of sexual harassment is the importance of the person who is exposed to the harassment. So in a way the experience, the subjective experience counts quite a lot, so even if the person who then allegedly harassed says that this was only a trifle or that it was just humour, it was just a joke, then the experience of the victim or the person who claims to be exposed to the harassment will weigh heavily mhm.

(Deniz)

She is also emphasising on the major importance the subjective experience has. It seems like she is referring to the significance of the subjective experience when it comes to case handling. A person claiming to have been exposed to sexual harassment will most likely have a heavier stand on the case and lead the direction of the case. The intention of the claimed harasser will not be of significance when the person at the receiving end feel violated.

On the other hand, it is also not likely that anyone can just claim something to be sexual harassment:

It is not just left to the individual in a way because I said initially that the subjective is of great importance, yes, it is. But you cannot decide for yourself that whatever is sexual harassment and such, it does not guarantee you a case, so one has in fact in law developed an objective norm for what the average Norwegian or the average person should endure. So, you cannot call out whatever, there is also a definition of what you must expect to be able to withstand to a certain degree.

(Deniz)

Deniz is making sure to justify that even potential accusations are regulated by law, therefore a person cannot simply claim to have been violated in that manner without having to account for the act through a certain definition.

Lastly, Simmi also reflects on this notion of subjective experience:

...the definition is in the recipient's head, and what is harassment is also a bit individual and internal. Although I agree that there are some clear limit values, but I think it is the recipient who is sitting with great definition power and what is unacceptable behaviour ( ) it is not a black and white world then you have to of course respect the recipient's eh ... interpretation, or perception then, perception, or experience maybe, experience yes.

(Simmi)

Simmi refers to the fact that the world is not black and white when it comes to issues such as sexual harassment, and although there are some limit values, the definition is indeed in the hands of the receiver. Simmi is basically saying that the subjective experience of the violated person has to be of significance because of the nature of the personal and internal sexual harassment issues, and there will most likely never be black and white findings in a case concerning sexual harassment. This is a representation of why the perspective of definition is important.

Mechanisms Behind Sexual Harassment

The participants regularly brought up issues of gender and power imbalances, which were persistent factors that were mentioned in relation to sexual harassment. The constant references to these elements make them significant in terms of participants' perceptions of the phenomenon. Also, these imbalances are especially mentioned in reference to the understanding of why sexual harassment occurs, both generally and particularly in the higher education sector. It implies that through having such understanding, the organisation can work more target oriented with their preventive actions.

Natasha is expressing her thoughts on gender differences, how women are the main targets and why it is important to remember that when working with sexual harassment:

Yes, it is mainly men who harass women. It is also because they are in such a position often, they allow it for themselves [there is also talk about women harassing] yes, I'm very tired of hearing that. It's a little like when you say yes it's just as bad for men, it's only nonsense and foolish. Research has shown for several decades that it's mostly women who are exposed, there are young women, there are women in vulnerable situations, and then you should not come and lift the men forward and say yes but look at us, look at us. And there are mostly men who stand for it too. I know it happens the other way around and, but, and we are aware, it's not like we don't know about it, but it's most important to take the top of the

problem. Yes that's what I think because when one starts talking about the other side of the matter, that it also goes the other way, then it's so easy to talk away from what really is the biggest problem. It's very easy to downplay eh pulverisation of responsibility, then you just try to make little out of something that is highly serious and critical, and one has to watch out for that. Therefore there is always focus on women for it's mostly them, also recent studies have shown that female PhD candidates are the most exposed at the universities, so it's something about that women are more often in a vulnerable situation than men, it is a fact yes.

(Natasha)

Natasha is explicitly saying that women are the vulnerable group, and she thinks it is critically necessary to work at the crucial end of the problem. So, if we change the focus towards men the issue will merely become neutralised and nobody will take any accountability or feel obligated to work proactively with the main problem. Meaning, there must be a focus on women as the vulnerable group when working preventively, hence targeting their preventive actions where it is necessary. Also, this is why it is important to understand that in terms of sexual harassment, gender is an important factor. Additionally, Natasha also refer to the state of female PhD candidates, who have been revealed to be majorly subjected to sexual harassment at universities, which I will come back to a little later in the analysis.

Contrary to Natasha who explicitly emphasises on the vulnerability of women in regard to sexual harassment, Anita points out the gender issue from a slightly different perspective:

...you know what, I think we look for it. I don't think we look for ladies who are harassing to the same degree. I think we are not sure either. I think we may have to look for it in a different way then, mhm. Or that it is in other ways that it happens, but it is, I think it also happens. Because men often have power and it is power that is in a position to harass. The day it turns or let's say then, as a thought experiment, that it was the other way around, that women were in more positions of power, then I think it would have happened just as much.

(Anita)

Anita does not necessarily perceive gender as a main concern behind sexual harassment, but rather emphasises on the position of power. According to her, we look for what we want to look for, and she does not look away from the fact that women with power are equally capable of these actions. Power gets the blame for sexual harassment incidents, and with that it is also implied that sexual harassment does not necessarily take place between equal colleagues on a horizontal level, but between superiors and subordinates, in the vertical line. With this in mind, prevention needs to target power imbalances, and not necessarily gender imbalances.

Moreover, in regard to case 2 (Appendix 4) later in the interview, Anita pointed out the vulnerability of PhD candidates in the higher education sector, in line with Natasha's earlier statement:

...the PhD candidate's vulnerable role, how they are often dependent on, is in a one-way dependency relationship with a very skewed balance of power, and that is in itself a risky situation for ehh, yes it's a risky situation in itself for being harassed. And if one combines it with being young and a girl, then it's a risk situation, especially also to be exposed to sexual harassment.

(Anita)

PhD candidates are commonly in a dependency relation with their supervisor, hence they are a vulnerable group at an education institution. Here, she is indicating the unfortunate disadvantage one can have in the combination of being a young and female PhD candidate. By acknowledging that there are certain groups who are in riskier positions in the sector due to power imbalances, it reinforces the severity of sexual harassment and necessity of better systems to preserve them.

In the extract below, Deniz is talking about power imbalances in regard to roles in a workplace:

Once one speaks of working life then concepts such as power imbalance and asymmetry of power also come up in relation to that one as a leader, superior, etc., and that will also seem aggravating then if one exposes their subordinates to, to sexual harassment with that power, one should be aware of one's power and one's role.

(Deniz)

Deniz is emphasising on the importance of being aware of the role one has at the workplace, and the power that role comes with. It is an indication that even just the role of a leader or a superior person can be enough to make a subordinate person feel insecure. Our perceptions of these principal work roles can have an effect on how we understand sexual harassment at the workplace. Therefore, creating role understanding and role awareness is crucial for the one holding the higher position, such as a professor or supervisor, in order to take preventive actions.

A New Understanding After #MeToo

It is not possible to talk about sexual harassment without #MeToo since the movement took place. Although I had some specific questions about the movement towards the end of the interview, it was persistently brought up into the conversation all the way from the beginning. This suggests that the #MeToo has become an integrated part of the phenomenon of sexual harassment, hence a fundamental part of our perceptions of it. The most important outcome of #MeToo seems to be how it has expanded our understanding of what sexual harassment consists of. In the extract below, Marte speaks about what #MeToo meant for her:

The fact that it brought forth the range in what a sexual harassment is, since we often look at the severity and think that like everything is about that coarse groping, it is the whole span and it is sort of metoo for me, that one got that to the surface.

(Marte)

Marte sort of links #MeToo to the grey areas of sexual harassment. She is stating that sexual harassment is actually more than the obvious obscene and physical behaviour, it is a whole range of behaviours. In her mind, #MeToo helped to create and raise a new understanding of sexual harassment, hence highlight the severity even from the mildest form of it. Not only did it lead to a change in the minds of the society but forced workplaces to take it seriously and add the whole range of sexual harassment into their preventive work. To complement this, Deniz cites someone who referred to #MeToo as a revolution:

Well, on March 8. last year we had some professional speakers from here who said that, if you think a little bit like this before and after metoo, then there has really been a

revolution. Almost a paradigm shift, both in what is experienced and accepted in a way, is perceived as okay and not okay, and how seriously you take it.

<div align="right">(Deniz)</div>

She is likewise indicating how #Metoo, in a great deal, impacted the understanding of what behaviour is acceptable, as well as the severity of the unacceptable acts. The comparison to a revolution and paradigm shift elevates the whole grasp of the movement to another level and draws a picture of the power the movement has had. Besides creating a new perception of sexual harassment, the movement has led every workplace to take actions on the issue, even the education sector.

Moreover, some participants feel that by expanding our understanding and perceptions on the range of sexual harassment, #MeToo has brought a change in our attitudes. This is also illustrated by Deniz as she talks about the changes in attitudes before and after #MeToo:

It has been a very change of attitudes before and after metoo. It was precisely what metoo was about. It was not just employers, but also often women, or those who have been harassed themselves. It was more such a time where oh well that's just how it is, that's how he is, I'll just have to endure or accept this.

<div align="right">(Deniz)</div>

Deniz is talking about the impact on women or individuals who would settle because that was just how it was. She is indicating that #MeToo has brought attitudinal changes that has led to a perception that even the slightest form of unwanted behaviour is in fact sexual harassment, and not acceptable. This is suggesting that the movement did indeed alert workplaces, but also helped individuals better understand that they can speak up against these unpleasant actions because they are in fact inappropriate.

While these participants emphasised on the general impact of #MeToo on the new understanding of sexual harassment, Marte linked her new understanding to her personal experiences. In the extract below she reflects on how she began perceiving such incidents differently after #MeToo:

I thought about it now with the metoo, when it comes up like it, all those cases began to roll up. Then I started to think for myself, yes how many times have I not experienced it? many times, very so subtly and a little like, don't really know or just a bit of such unpleasant situations, but in a way to understand that yes, actually this was really not okay, that slap on the butt.

(Marte)

Marte's experience is actually exemplifying how women started perceiving sexual harassment incidents differently due to the #MeToo movement. Even Marte, who works closely with issues like these, needed #MeToo to understand that this kind of behaviour was not okay. This implies how significant #MeToo was and still is for our understanding of those daily, small sexual harassment incidents that create a hostile work environment for the employees.

To sum up, sexual harassment is perceived through a legal lens when it comes to severity of it, while it is also an understanding that it can be more than just the obvious physical form. Gender and power imbalances are understood as mechanisms that stand behind the occurrence of sexual harassment, or at least create room for it to take place. It is important to consider these mechanisms when working preventively with sexual harassment. Additionally, #MeToo has been a huge impact to understand the range of sexual harassment and the grey areas of it. The ambiguity that comes with the grey areas are considered as a reason why it is difficult to work preventively with the issue. This is why it can be essential to work with certain tools of prevention to help, which are covered in the next theme.

Superordinate Theme 2: The Tools of Prevention

This second superordinate theme of the analysis begins to embark on the second thesis question, so this is where the preventive aspect of the research is brought up. Through the viewpoints of the participants it is suggested that working on the workplace culture is a substantial preventive action. They indicate how various cultural tools within the organisation may have the potential to create the aspired culture at a workplace of this fashion. The overall emphasis on the workplace culture is implied, both explicitly and implicitly, through which, two key cultural points have surfaced; support and awareness. These two key points of the cultural preventive work are the basis of the subordinate themes that are illustrating the findings of this superordinate theme. The first theme *'the tool of support'* grasps the necessity of social support for those who has experienced sexual harassment, as well as using support as a tool to correct each other. Some important factors drawn from this subtheme are the power

of the group, colleague support, communication amongst colleagues, employeeship, and the importance of involvement to enhance support. The second subordinate theme *'the tool of awareness'* considers the importance of bringing awareness regarding sexual harassment in the workplace that can be necessary for the effectiveness of the preventive aspect. Some elements that are considered in this subtheme are to bring awareness to acceptable and unacceptable behaviours related to sexual harassment, being aware of workplace roles, and of policies and procedures. These two subthemes can easily be linked to each other throughout the analysis as the participants speak about both of them quite interrelatedly. Thus, they have emerged as the suggested key cultural preventive aspects to work with for a complex organisation to tackle the issue of sexual harassment. These findings surfaced through the participants' direct implications, as well as my indirect interpretations of them.

The Tool of Support

The tool of social support in the organisation emerges as an essential suggestion in order to work preventively with the sensitive issue of sexual harassment. The analysis showed that besides the link to the preventive part, the participants also mention this particular instrument of support when someone already has faced such a situation. In the first extract below, Anita is talking about how a group of colleagues can work together and prevent sexual harassment by supporting each other:

…having a few rounds in the plenary where the group themselves agree, it is very powerful. As it also means that you get some ehh, opportunity to, call it social sanctions, then that people can put ehh, say to each other, now you're going beyond what we have agreed on in the group. Leader is not the only one anymore who can give ehh call it punishment, or sanctions, if you step over, but you start to regulate one another to a greater extent when you have talked about these things here, it is my experience.

(Anita)

She points out how a group of colleagues can create the room to support and elevate each other so incidents of this sort can be prevented. The group can go together and create collective *'social sanctions'* that will allow them to correct each other by communicating when someone behaves inappropriately. With this, she indicates that unfortunate behaviour can be unintentional when people are unaware of whether their actions are inappropriate or not, which can be seen in the light of those previously mentioned grey area behaviours. This is why by proper communication, it is possible to correct these people. This way we can

support those who might be saying or doing something inappropriate, which will simultaneously support the person on the receiving end. Thus, a preventive step towards sexual harassment can be taken through creating such a supportive environment by getting together in the group and agree on how to take actions.

There is also one other point made by Anita in this extract, which suggests the importance of support. When colleagues can support each other through regulating each other, it can also take some of the load off of the leaders/managers, who are seemingly often in a tricky position in such cases. This way, the group of colleagues will also indirectly provide support to those leaders/managers. This very extract can also be linked to awareness, which will be scrutinised later in the analysis.

Anita elaborates on this notion of group power in the next extract:

...one thing that I am very concerned about when the topic we are talking about now, now I'm getting a little more and more into it. It is to ehh .. the competence of the employees around to speak up and set boundaries and be clear when they observe that someone goes over the line. I think that's where there is a great potential in changing culture. So that it's not always the responsibility of the person who experiences something themselves, that they have to tell, but that we help all employees to have expertise on what do I do if I see someone else being exposed to it, because the biggest ehh, Group has the power to change things if we all agree that we should speak, and if someone crosses the line then it will change faster than if just one person is to tell each time they experience something.

(Anita)

Here it is suggested that interventions by colleagues can be important for those who face sexual harassment and find it troublesome to speak up or do anything about it on their own. It can be significant from the preventive perspective that employees enhance their competence of intervening in order to create a supportive atmosphere at work. She is explicitly saying that this way of support has the potential to change the culture within a workplace, which may consequently remove the immense responsibility from the individual person to handle the problem alone. Ultimately, the tool of prevention can empower the individuals of the organisation. Complementary, Natasha expresses how support is important for those who has already been through the adversity of sexual harassment:

...you know when there are heavy cases it's always difficult to stand alone. It's very difficult. So metoo made it possible for groups, large groups, several thousands of women could stand up, then it's also easier, together we are strong, so I believe that. That's why I also say to ladies who have been exposed to such, talk with your colleagues, students. Have they also been exposed to the same thing, don't sit with it inside, it's not your responsibility, go and talk to them so you can together come out, mhm it's a lot easier.

(Natasha)

Even here it is implied that an individual person requires support. In the first extract, she is referring to the reporting system, which works in a way that allows anyone who are aware of any inappropriate behaviour to report an incident of sexual harassment. This can be perceived as support through the system. Even though prevention is the focus, we cannot face away from the fact that an organisation must also have a system in order to preserve those who experience sexual harassment. While system is important, Natasha also bring up the importance of social support for those who have faced unwanted behaviour. Having a culture of support at the workplace can be an additional factor for both working preventively with sexual harassment, and also for creating safety for individuals. In addition, #MeToo is referred to in order to illustrate the power a group can have together. With this it is demonstrated that it is actually possible to have an effect together, and if the group continues to keep strong, the effect can last, just like #MeToo. With this, support is suggested to be a group task that is an important factor for the cultural preventive work.

Furthermore, Simmi adds the notion of employeeship to the idea of working on the culture of support, "so in my head it's maybe about having a lot of focus on good employeeship and it means respect and bring out the best in each other work with team hence the culture in an environment".

Simmi emphasises on working with employeeship. This implies that focusing on employeeship will create a supportive environment among colleagues and teams, as they may feel an ownership and responsibility towards their organisation. Any environmental work that can enhance the supportive atmosphere is considered essential, which is illustrating that support among colleagues is considered as an essential factor for better work environment.

Lastly, Marte highlights the element of employee involvement that can help to enhance colleague support:

...also, I think it's about, the employees must be involved in that work, in the process of working preventatively. I think one has to think that one is, try to work a little broadly ehm that one is, the safety representative is involved. We have had many rounds with the safety representative on it and union representatives on training in relation to harassment, and prevention of harassment. Because they also have an important role right, very closely in the working environment.

<div align="right">(Marte)</div>

Working on a broader note with developing competence in the employees, can lead to more knowledge for colleagues to support each other. Increasing the competency on a horizontal level (among colleagues) may perhaps be equally, if not more, effective than competency development of leaders. This can be linked back to the aforementioned interventions by colleagues, which can have the power to create a strong supportive environment, and ultimately be one piece of the preventive aspect puzzle.

The Tool of Awareness

The last subordinate theme is about having awareness, without which the former subtheme of support can become indefinite. It can be interpreted that there is no communication on sexual harassment without awareness about it, and thus no room of support for it. Participants draw on this notion of awareness in several ways, which highlights the importance of this tool for the preventive aspect. Tara is illustrating how awareness around sexual harassment is the foremost crucial part of prevention:

Yes, it's a little what we have been talking about already, to make it known that there are procedures, but just even talking about it in different contexts and pointing out that there are certain limits in the working life on how to behave, because it is. Yes, we know that this is something that has also happened before and maybe it has been less addressed earlier than now, so it's probably the most important thing, to pay attention to this topic.

<div align="right">(Tara)</div>

In the extract above, Tara is underlining that even though there are procedures, there is still important to create awareness about the issue. Although the system of an organisation is

doing its job, the individuals in the institution also need to do a job. This job is to create awareness on correct behaviour regarding sexual harassment in the workplace. She is indicating that perhaps sexual harassment is an issue that has been neglected earlier, in terms of the amount of attention that it actually requires. Therefore, the increased attention that has emerged recently has led to more awareness in organisations. The effect of awareness has already been evidently displayed by #MeToo, that led to an extended awareness about sexual harassment and the range of it, including grey areas. This illustrates that awareness can keep the employees alert and updated. Tara elaborates further about the awareness on the policies and procedures:

I think it's very good that we have so much focus on it and that one is concerned with handling these cases properly because it's, we know that it's difficult for those affected, but then we can also with that focus and with those guidelines, we can reassure people, so that they actually get the courage to report about such incidents. And I think that maybe it has become more of that, more dare to report than before.

(Tara)

It is implied that by creating awareness around procedures of reporting one is able to create reassurance for employees, especially for those who feel affected. Through such reassurance, she believes that the sense of safety increases, which may lead to more people reporting unacceptable behaviour complaints. When the tendency to report increases, the statistics get stronger, and then there can be better targeted awareness and knowledge building around the preventive work. Hence, awareness becomes a stronger tool when the system around policies and procedures is grounded.

Another aspect of awareness in this regard is to be aware of the workplace roles and the power a person is sitting with. This is also an important element mentioned in the earlier subtheme *'consequences of imbalances'* under the first superordinate theme. Deniz explicitly claims "one must be aware of one's power and one's role". To elaborate on that notion, Marte emphasises on the importance of awareness around a person's position in an institution:

Talk about it, a lot, ehh we are concerned with that we should talk about it, discuss to try to create an openness, but also to create a greater awareness. Very important, to make employees aware of their role, their power, even though one may feel completely powerless in

this huge system of 9000 employees you have more power as a professor or associate professor than you have if you are a PhD candidate. That's how it is, and having to understand a little bit, it's not that easy I don't think everyone thinks so much about it.

<div align="right">(Marte)</div>

It is suggested that communication is important to create openness in the work culture, next to expanding awareness in the organisation. It is implied how one can feel powerless in the large and complex context of a higher education institution. That's why a person who sits with a power-based role can make mistakes of asserting power unintentionally when they are not aware of the responsibility that role carries. The tool of awareness is suggested to be of importance in making the employees in these certain roles aware of their positions. This way, the workplace culture can be positively affected by preventing unwanted incidents to take place, especially when they occur unintentionally and have a negative effect on two lives. To get a further understanding of this view, Marte illustrated it even more later in the interview. Here she reflects over a preventive measure that I heard of, where it was advised to keep the door open in a meeting with a supervisor:

...one also has to look at the situation. Does the person want, the one being guided who has less power, want to close the door because it wants to cry because he's so frustrated and sad, because it's so difficult that assignment and this doesn't work, then you have to be allowed to do that. One must be allowed to be a good supervisor and maybe give comfort also, but it must also be possible to, in a way make it a bit up to the one who has less power to say close the door, don't close the door, and to be aware of one's role. It has not hurt anyone.

<div align="right">(Marte)</div>

With this example she reminded herself and me that it is actually not always about sexual harassment, it is also about being a good supervisor and getting the supervision that you need as a student, PhD candidate etc. But, as it is interpreted from her extract, one can make it very simple and be a good supervisor or manager by being aware of the power imbalance in the particular relationship. One can politely let the person with less power set the premises for the situation, perhaps communicate about what the person prefers. So, by working to create awareness on this particular dilemma, an organisation can create better understanding and knowledge around the power people have in their roles and take a step

towards preventing unwanted incidents. With time, this understanding can then become a part of the organisations learning and memory.

Moreover, while some talk about general awareness of sexual harassment in an organisation, Simmi is concerned with the continuity of working with awareness. In the next extract she is particularly talking about awareness around policies and procedures:

One thing is that they have been announced at some point, another thing is if they are remembered and understood when something happens. That is a completely different dimension. So, one might rather ask, are they repeated every six months or every year, or is it a onetime..

(Simmi)

For Simmi the concern is not whether an institution is working with awareness of their internal policies and procedures around sexual harassment or not. That is something they had to do at a certain point nowadays anyway. What is of question is whether they continue to keep their employees aware and alert, and how often that happens. This is a critical look at organisational work that I found to be an interesting part of the analysis. If an organisation does not repeatedly keep their employees aware, the knowledge may decline from their memory with time. So, repeating is important for the organisational memory to keep intact.

Finally, Deniz was asked if she has some general rules for sexual harassment. Her answer exquisitely grasps this theme's essence:

It's difficult to say anything in general if you are going to cover several areas, and one can at least not say use common sense because like the problem with common sense is that it isn't common. So yes, if something in general should be, then it must be, I just think, just say ohh use normal manners. People have incredibly different perception so maybe the general rule has to be that there is no general rule and therefore people have to be told a little like, how do we want it here at the institution and how do we not want it, because one can believe that everyone knows what's right and what's wrong. No we are different and everything from different sexes, backgrounds, cultures ( ) so the general may well be that this isn't general and therefore it must be pretty clear on what belongs and don't belongs, at a given

workplace.

<div align="right">(Deniz)</div>

Deniz is illustrating that it is very difficult to create general rules regarding an issue of such sensitivity. Due to the diversity of people and their backgrounds, common sense cannot be considered common, which is exactly why we need to create awareness. Working with awareness is a part of working with the culture of the organisation, which needs to be common for all the diverse people within the organisation. So, by creating awareness about the culture of that particular workplace, the employees are made aware of the fact that they have to respect the policies of their organisation. And by having some ground rules about acceptable behaviour that, by linking back to Simmi's concern, are being repeated regularly, the organisation can slowly incarnate it into the organisation's memory.

Overall, these suggestions of support and awareness are the cultural perspectives that have emerged as important links to the prevention of sexual harassment. Social support from colleagues that can communicate, intervene and put social sanctions on each other is a suggestion. Additionally, the suggestion of awareness is considered essential for informational purposes and to create learning and memory in the organisation. In order to have the capacity to work on these cultural preventive actions, an organisation needs some foundations that can enable them to do so. These organisational foundations will be presented next.

Superordinate Theme 3: Organisational Foundations for Prevention

The third and last superordinate theme is continuing on embarking the second thesis question and is therefore linked to the second subordinate theme *the tools of prevention*. The previous theme presented cultural preventive tools that were found to be important for an organisations' preventive work. However, through participants' thought and reflections, I interpret that in order to take on these preventive measures there must be some organisational foundations in place. These foundations are the basis for the findings in this particular superordinate theme. They are the result of my interpretations of the participants' further suggestive thoughts that emerged throughout the interviews. The analysis is demonstrating three essential foundations in an organisation that have emerged as important elements required in order to enhance their ability to work preventively and potentially over time. These are illustrated through three subordinate themes. The first subtheme *'the systematic work foundation'* emphasises on the importance of policies and procedures in an organisation and its responsibility to follow them. Participants mentioned the systematic work concerning

the sound working environment, case handling and organisational trust. The second subtheme '*leadership – training and support*' emphasises on leadership as a foundation. It considers complexity of leaders and managers who have an obvious role in regard to working with issues like sexual harassment, also the preventive side. Nevertheless, due to the sensitive nature of this issue, their positions and roles are quite difficult. The last subtheme *'the safe climate'* grasps the element of ensuring to protect the working individual that has experienced sexual harassment, as well as the working individual who has been accused for sexual harassment. These dichotomies are brought up to light by a few participants but has managed to stand out as important aspects of the analysis.

The Systematic Work Foundation

Throughout the narratives, participants indicated how important it is with the systematic work of policies and procedures in an organisation. Most, or all, higher education institutions already have such policies in order, however whether they are followed correctly can be the issue. I found it significant for the analysis since it emerged as a foundation that is needed in order to work towards the cultural preventive work. In this first extract Deniz is reflecting on how organisations have responded after #MeToo:

Metoo has certainly contributed to an increased awareness, but also a solid review of what each individual business is doing and how we can improve. So it's probably a change on several levels, from what the top leaders go out and say and to an attempt at cultural change to down to technical things with the procedures of reporting.

(Deniz)

In this one extract, Deniz is summarising how #MeToo affected the way organisations had to work with sexual harassment. She mentions the element of culture, which is mainly what the important preventive tools are based on in the previous theme of the analysis. Additionally, she mentions the element of policies and procedures, as a part of the systematic work on sexual harassment. Although, most organisations do have policies and procedures in place, it does not mean they are good and well established. All the reason why they needed the improvement now that sexual harassment was back on the agenda. In the extract below, Anita is speaking about the importance of repetitive work by an organisation when working with prevention:

It's important to work systematically and it's important not to ehh, to accept that you have to do the same thing over and over. Don't think that now we have said it so then we are done and don't have to say it again. There's replacements the whole time of both employees and managers, and times change, and people forget, so we have to repeat and repeat and repeat, and we must do it continuously and systematically. That's what I think is important with the process.

(Anita)

This notion can be linked back to Simmi's concern of preventive work continuity, under the subtheme *'The tool of awareness'.* Anita is stating that it is important to work systematically with prevention, and as large organisation with a regular employee turnover, it is all the more vital to work repeatedly and systematically. To work with prevention, certain systems need to be established that can take on the preventive work and imbed it in the organisation. With the constant changes and tendency to forget, systematic work may be the way into creating learning and build a memory for the organisation. In my interpretation, if this is imbedded in the system, frequent reminding through communication can possibly create a memory for the organisation and it becomes a naturally absorbed knowledge

In the next extract Natasha is commenting on case 2 (Appendix 4) in regard to a certain comment about the supervisor, and the ultimate handling of the case:

After all she has endured for 2-3 years, and that's an incredibly long time that he has really been kept going. He's seemingly been kept going for a long time and the thing with that, I have also even heard myself 'that's just how he is'. It's about the worst thing I hear, because it means one accepts this type of behaviour, that's what it means really. It means you just sweep it under and just say, and no one is going to accept it. It's just, it's a total disclaimer, that's what it is. So the positive here is the faculty doing what the institute should have done, but I also think it should have consequences for him. He should for example be interviewed about his other fellows, he probably has more than her and then it's also important to clarify, maybe talk to them and, and check if they have experienced anything. I would think it would be right and, but I'm glad the faculty has at least done something about it ( ). He should at least have been confronted with it and the leader said that this is not accepted whatsoever, we do not accept this type of behaviour, if it repeats if someone else speaks up about the same whether it's women or men, then you will have consequences, you

could lose your job or yes.

<div align="right">(Natasha)</div>

It seems that there might be difficult to achieve any fair consequences for the professor here, but Natasha is emphasising that the organisation still has a duty to document and warn him, because that is the standard systematic procedure. By saying "that's just how he is" she is indicating that they are removing responsibility from their capes instead of acting on his unacceptable behaviour, which then works contradictory when it comes to prevent such incidents in the future. Through the system of correct documented warnings, they can be able to keep evidence of his behaviour to prevent future happenings, which is the purpose for such policies and procedures in the first place. Also, it is implied that the faculty tried to handle the case, bust still with a quite unfair case handling as support from her organisation come across as non-existing here. Thus, if the organisation does not act properly on the systematic prevention, the cultural preventive work will merely be decoration on paper.

Furthermore, Anita also reacts on that particular comment about the supervisor from the same case:

…'that's just how he is', yes that's not okay, to get such an answer I think anyway. And I think that here should have and, what's interesting here and is that 'that's just how he is' it gives the impression that he has done this before, this is well known, ehm and it ( ) Yes also they conclude in a sense that this is an unjustifiable working environment for her. And that, after they draw such a conclusion, then I want to believe that this is familiar for them, so ehh it's not okay that he if this is well known and everyone knows it, then it's not okay that he can go free without having any, that it will have consequences for him, or that he is rebuked or get some sanctions in his direction I think.

<div align="right">(Anita)</div>

Anita draws on the fact that this is a hostile working environment for the PhD candidate, which is also concluded by the faculty who investigated the problem. Not only do they imply that they are in fact aware of his behaviour by saying 'that's just how he is', but they are also letting him get away. As employers they have the duty of creating a sound working environment, which in this case they are handling halfway by not following the established procedures of documenting this report. Drawing back to the earlier subtheme

'consequences of imbalances', the professors' power seems to be playing a role here, which if policies and procedures are correctly followed, shall not do.

Adding to this, Tara contemplates on the systematic work behind case handling:

...yes the main thing with these procedures is first and foremost how the cases should be handled when they first occur, ehm .. So it's probably not prevention that is the primary purpose of those procedures, it is to get a proper and good case handling of those cases when they first occur.

(Tara)

According to Tara, the purpose of policies and procedures is not necessarily to prevent sexual harassment, but rather to ensure correct case handling. What can be drawn from this is that the systematic foundation does not exist to stop sexual harassment to occur at all but exist to guide those who are handling these cases to stop the case from going any further. In other words, policies and procedures may prevent further inappropriate actions from the same person or further retaliation for the offended person if followed correctly. So according to Simmi their primary purpose may not be prevention, but if the primary purpose is established, prevention naturally becomes the secondary purpose.

Anita elaborates on this notion as she reflects over a preventive measure of keeping the door open in a meeting with a supervisor:

I think we can have a system that works to a certain extent. We have to have a system that is equipped for this, and that system can for example, part of it can be so down to detail as you say, that the door must be open right. It can be part of a policy one has created in a workplace. I don't want to say if it's right or wrong. I think if someone experiences it themselves so that, or maybe you can do, or if you have a policy on it then it might make some people feel that it's easier to actually do it that way. So that it can be a consideration to take. But one must also work with the culture for it. Can't just talk about the system, one must also have individuals who behave wisely and have good attitudes about this topic.

(Anita)

She is expressing the idea that if such measures as keeping the door open under supervision meetings can make some people feel more secure, then they might just be required in the policies of an institution. Systems can make it more acceptable for people to follow such guidelines, as opposed to them just being a part of the cultural norms that only certain people follow. In reference to her last comment about attitudes, what can be drawn from it is that the system and the culture are reciprocal factors in some way. The systematic way cannot be of any help if an organisation neglects the cultural aspect of it all. Not only for preventive reason, but also in order to establish these systems.

Moreover, the conception of trust was also brought up by some participants. It is illustrated well by Deniz when she is discussing case 1 (Appendix 4) in regard to their case handling:

I think they have to also take the matter internally, because you have to come to a conclusion before you act and have some measures, mhm. They can't just sort of separate people, it must be on the basis of something. So simply go back a little, but it shows how difficult it is if you have already handled a case poorly. You lose all trust and it's difficult to go back and of course yes so.

(Deniz)

She is concluding that because of the police case involved they need to go back and investigate the case internally again in order to conclude better. She is using this case to exemplify how incorrect case handling can end up in lost organisational trust. According to her, lost trust is the reason why the woman in this case goes to the police in the first place. She is also adding on why trust can be lost, "people see that there is a gap between what is said yes zero tolerance, and it should be safe to report and come on but if you see that in practice it's not that easy then you somehow lose credibility". So, when there is an apparent inconsistency between theory and reality, this discrepancy creates a diminished trust. If an organisation cannot build trust in their employees, they cannot have them collaborate to work preventively through enhancing the culture for support and awareness.

Lastly, Deniz explicitly asserts that we need to learn by practice by referring to case 2 (Appendix 4):

...how can we then prevent this from happening again right. It's of course important that we learn from the cases we have and then it's perhaps that one has, and most probably do have, guidelines for supervision that will largely work preventively, which are about how and where supervision can take place. And that one can sign on some principles for supervision, that one has taken a doctoral supervision course that thematises harassment and metoo etc.

(Deniz)

In her mind, it all depends on the organisational learning and memory ability from existing cases. By correcting where the system failed, we can also correct further targeted preventive work. By keep learning and create a better memory of what went wrong and what was done right, there will automatically be a continuity in working with sexual harassment.

Leadership – Training and Support

Leaders and managers are constantly brought up in regard to the people who are in charge for most of the work in handling cases, and a lot of the case outcomes seems to be in their hands. The participants demonstrate these ideas through constantly bringing up leadership and management throughout the data, though which their significant roles have appeared in these findings.

Several participants mentioned reasons for support and training for leaders, because of their difficult positions. In this first extract, Natasha is reflecting on whether there is room enough to work on sexual harassment cases for leaders in their daily workload:

I think if one had time for it, it's still not for sure that he had done it, because he thinks it's pretty much so difficult. I think there is a possibility that it would be put in a pile where there's these difficult cases, and then it could be attended later. So then I don't think it's about time but it's more about type of cases. There are an incredible number of people who think this is so difficult, I understand it

(Natasha)

She thinks that with sensitive issues like sexual harassment, it is not about having time, but instead about taking the time. In their daily work managers have so many responsibilities that complicated cases like sexual harassment, might be the easy choice to put away. When cases are not handled on time, it does not necessarily reflect the leader or

manager's competency in their role, but rather the nature of these cases. While some may put these cases away due to workload, others may deliberately put them away due to the challenging task they come with. Not only does this create a challenge towards correct case handling, but also towards taking preventive actions.

Further, Tara is also mentioning a reason why it might be difficult for a leader to take actions:

There may not be a simple answer to that, because in some environments it has probably formed a culture over many many years. One has accepted things one shouldn't have accepted. When you have done so, it becomes even more difficult to say that it's unacceptable. When you have sort of allowed it for many years, then it's difficult to suddenly turn it around and, then it can also be demanding for a leader to address it, ehh. But I think it's often because it has been allowed for a negative culture to be established in the working environment.

(Tara)

She is exemplifying one challenge as a leader where systems may be there to navigate them, but the established negative culture creates hassle. Outside factors create difficulty for them to speak up against something unacceptable that has been allowed for a long time. Systems may exist, and navigate them, but in a negative culture they have most likely not been followed correctly for a long time. If something has been a certain way for a long time, they cannot suddenly turn them around, which can also become a weakness in leadership. This is a good example of how robust systems and leadership create a required foundation for an organisation in order to be able to work with sexual harassment.

Although taking actions against sexual harassment can be demanding for managers, Marte is expressing on why leaders need to speak up on time:

...then maybe we women in particular begin to find strategies on how we shall deal to avoid getting into situations like this. It's absolutely awful that it should be like that. Then actually some leaders need to or someone who then speaks up about such bad behaviour at an early stage, so that they can correct their behaviour and realise that this is not okay, because if they don't say anything about it, if the manager doesn't say something about this, then the

leader also implicitly says that this behaviour here is okay, it's perfectly okay to behave like this.

(Marte)

In Marte's view, when women are constant targets of sexual harassment, from their private to their work life, they find strategies to avoid the situations. Leaders and managers are in a powerful position where they can educate about the unacceptable and inappropriate behaviour so that those with these tendencies get the opportunity to learn on time. In her mind, when leaders keep their silence about such issues, they are expressing and permeating acceptance for it in their organisation. If leaders, in their role of authority, take firm stand in front of employees and remind them of unacceptable behaviour, the preventive measures will hold a much stronger position. Not only can it be of help in a workplace, but their words may also trigger some thoughts in people that can have a ripple effect in the society and work into the general safety of women.

Deniz addresses that managers have to act professionally when been made aware of such issues:

First a little back to this with registering it right. Because one has to keep in mind that although some individual cases may seem trivial and one may think she reacts to everything and, oh well. You surely can feel that way. But you should be professional, and you should record it. Because what we have seen in several cases is that in itself one might wonder if this is a case, is it something to move on with, but as you have that documentation and then maybe you can do a search on the person and see, oh yes there are seven other such trivial matters on the person. But then you will have much better case. Then you will see that this is quite a frequent occurrence, there are many who experience it, then it will surely strengthen the case for those who reported.

(Deniz)

As professionals, their personal feelings or opinions are not supposed to intervene in any way in a sexual harassment case. She is elaborating on how even the minor cases that can be perceived as trifles can contribute in making a case against a serial harasser, and consequently prevent them from harming anyone else in future. No matter how a woman is perceived as a person, if such incidents are reported by her, her word has to be taken

seriously. For the purpose of prevention, it is important that managers do their duty correctly without letting personal feelings have any affect, even if it can be challenging. This exemplifies how leadership is, in fact an important foundation for working with further prevention of sexual harassment.

Moreover, the biggest challenge that is while working with sexual harassment are the aforementioned grey area cases, which Anita speaks of in regard to managers:

...bring these topics into leadership training ehm and learn ehm enable leaders to deal with grey area cases, it's often difficult. And it's often easy to, and then I really talk about harassment in general when I say this, where the leaders are very alone as I see. It's very clear if someone has experienced sexual abuse or if someone has been subjected to physical violence or threats, then it's very clear, then there are procedures for conflict management then it's a clear case. But in those cases where it's unclear ehm there I think there are many leaders who need more support and more competence development.

(Anita)

Anita feels that managers are very alone when they need to figure out a case with an element of unclarity due to the grey areas that make it all so much more complicated. Being alone can eventually make this foundation of leadership weaker, and thus the preventive work cannot become a focus. Anita mentions support and competency development, which can enable them to manage these cases with certainty. Also, training is considered essential in order to make this foundation stronger. Complementary, Tara is contemplating on the theory and reality of such cases:

...there is quite a lot of information about what sexual harassment is and there are lots, or many rules around it, but when you deal with the cases in reality then things will often be very different because, yes one has two parties often then, who have very different experiences and stories, and that makes it extra difficult to deal with those cases. So that, what can look okay in theory, it often becomes more complicated in reality then.

(Tara)

She is stating that there is plenty of information and regulations on how to handle such cases, however there are so much more to consider in reality. Due to the adversarial principle,

the accused has the right to share their side of the story, thus managers have to consider both sides. This consideration is part of the policy in case handling, however they need to have the competency to know the correct procedure with this policy in mind, where adequate training can be significant.

Moreover, Marte brings up the challenge of managers if employers confide in them:

...you can't just in a way, air thoughts on a case with your manager, for your manager has to follow it up, right. So you can't say, I wonder if Arne is a bit like that, he is teasing on me a bit I think, I don't know, is a bit uncomfortable, is not quite sure, I think he when we danced at the Christmas party don't know if he touched ehh, then the manager actually has to try, then one can't just let go of that information.

(Marte)

A manager cannot objectively listen to their employees disclose sexual harassment assumptions to them, no matter the level of extremity. Even if the employee just wants to discuss their concern without taking it further, as an employer, the manager is required to follow up such revelations as an organisational responsibility. Even though a manager attempts to make friendly relationships with their employees and have casual talks, they are still their leaders with a responsibility at work which that cannot run from. Robust leaders who remember their duty make a robust foundation that allows organisations to work on the cultural aspects for prevention.

Finally, Marte talks about how fewer real cases in higher education gives less training in handling them:

...otherwise I think it's simply that one feels it's really difficult to say it, to take that leadership role. But they have to do it because they are leaders and to understand that. It's difficult also, one doesn't have any training in it. It's not so surprising either because we have few cases in a sense right, and yes one can sign up for courses in conflict management and we can sign up for courses in the difficult conversation, that we have, but I probably don't think many people think, that one is not alert enough then to prepare for what should I do then. So, I think that may be something, a part of why one shovel a little under the rug, or one thinks 'yes but maybe he didn't mean it quite like that and, but isn't it a bit like when?'.

Marte addresses the lack of real training through real cases, as there are not too many real cases in the higher education sector for them to learn from. The low amount of sexual harassment cases is good of course, however the theoretical training may not create the extensive learning required when a case first occurs in reality. Since they are not prepared, it can be suggested to create learning and memory from old cases, which was mentioned by Deniz in the previous subordinate them *the systematic foundation.* This way they can identify the risks and the successes, which can strengthen their role as leaders and managers and enhance the foundation for the preventive work.

The Safe Climate

The last subordinate theme of the whole analysis revolves around having a safe climate at the workplace. Throughout the interviews, some important aspects that emerged were those of protecting the individual and ensuring safety at work. Especially the individuals who are brave enough to report and those who have to live with the label of 'alleged harasser'. In order to work preventively an organisation has to ensure safety by protecting these individuals once they need it, so the organisation can set an example for the rest of the employees. The employees are fundamental resources for organisations, which is why the safe climate is an important organisational foundation to consider.

The consequences and backlashes that women face if they report incidents, thus silencing them instead of empowering them, is something participants talk about. This is illustrated by Marte as she is putting the hardship of reporting into the higher education context:

...but at the same time I think it's difficult to tell about the unclear things and, those grey areas are difficult to tell about and. Also because one, one puts it in the context here, if you are a researcher, you want a future career here, should you then speak up about something that you are not quite like, in a way you are maybe sure that it was unpleasant but it's not for sure that. Interpretation of it and all the questions that comes with it are also a reason why many people don't report rape, even when that is not even something to speculate, it's so very very clear.. So then it's that it is, it is quite a huge burden to report, it's a very huge burden, it is.. It is that after all. So that I think a lot of people think a lot about. Those are the consequences it can have for the career for example, so it can probably be.

That I think certainly is one and that is what's so sad and what is difficult.

<div align="right">(Marte)</div>

She speaks about the strain of reporting an incident, especially in the higher education sector where a person can be immensely dependent on so many people for their future career prospects. Not only does it become a psychological burden, but it can also lead to professional retaliation. This is especially concerning the grey areas, as the ambiguity may lead to a conclusion where there are no consequences for the alleged harasser. Thus, the accused can continue working in the same position and make it unpleasant for the offended person. This is a particular example in academia where the institution has to be able to take care of the offended person. Otherwise, they are potentially hurting their reputation as well as the prospect of their future preventive actions by not ensuring safety for their employee through creating some changes for the better.

Deniz agrees on the idea that reporting can ultimately hurt your career in the higher education sector "you don't want to be looked at as such a troublemaker" and continues adding to this notion:

... one has read a lot about different whistle-blowers, not only on sexual harassment but also on financial infidelity, corruption etc, where one often sees that, it's what one reads with it that stays, that it does not pay to report, so that you become a bit like this pariah afterwards in a way, no one wants to take you in. At the same time, actual research shows that it's not, I mean, it's after all those cases you read, but I think it's important to point out that in most cases it's just fine to report it. One should not be so afraid of it, so then it's the organisation's job to somehow reassure people.

<div align="right">(Deniz)</div>

She stresses that reporting has been demonstrated to be a burden on the individual through media cases even though research shows otherwise. This is why an organisation needs to take the responsibility of creating a sense of security for their employees if they decide to report something inappropriate, this way they can also set an example for the rest. If an organisation can guarantee that their employees are taken care of, the foundation of the safe climate leaves room to work preventively in cooperation with the employees.

Furthermore, Anita reflects on working with sexual harassment in theory and reality:

...then yes it's the emotional dimension that shows up, that one does not see so easily on paper, with shame and guilt, and it hits some, those basic such innate feelings in us because we, it's so shameful, both can be, both, to maybe to have been exposed to it, but also not least to be a, call it abuser, ehm ... that ehmm ... It does trigger some like fears of social exclusion for example and some such quite yeah, set in motion some such basic or ... yes [emotions?] emotions yes. Which are strong, and which can lead to that in worst case, that people don't feel life is worth living anymore because one has got a reputation on them which one can't live with ehm yes, so that is, it is serious.

(Anita)

She is emphasising that in reality there are feelings involved, and that there are always two sides. There is the person who is feeling harassed, but not to forget the person who is accused for conducting the harassment. With this it is implied that the alleged harasser also needs to be protected from personal retaliation, and for their psychological well-being. She continues on this thought:

...but yes, as I said that I am concerned about a certain, we also have an employer responsibility for the person who is accused because it's easy to ruin someone's career by spreading a rumour. That's also something we should be aware of in an organisation when it's set up for power struggle to a large extent, which is also a feature of academia I believe.

(Anita)

Anita thinks of academia as a workplace consisting of power struggles where ruining careers can be easy, which is why they should be protecting the individual who has allegedly harassed someone, following the principle 'innocent until proven guilty'. This way an organisation will be providing a fair treatment to all their working individuals, so that their well-being is not jeopardised while still getting their fair measures of consequences, if they are concluded to have acted inappropriately.

Simmi speaks of an accused harasser from case 1 (Appendix 4) who was reported to the police, "I think if the person has been called into the office for a little formal conversation, then maybe he had taken a hint". According to Simmi, before someone takes such harsh

measures of involving the police, he should get the opportunity to correct himself. This is part of the systematic work on sexual harassment, where the manager is supposed to have a talk with the person as the first step, so they have the opportunity to tell their side of the story or they get the opportunity to correct themselves before it escalates. This way they get the opportunity of correction, while it may also prevent further incidents and benefit all the other working individuals, as well as the working environment.

Lastly, while reflecting on media, Deniz stresses that it is important to remember there are individual human beings involved on both sides:

...one has to be very aware of the responsibility one has, that there are people and individual destinies and you have to be extra conscious of the accountability and the ethics. It must neither become such a witch-hunt and you must have evidence for what is written, thus very important to step carefully because you, potentially you are pulverising and destroying a person and career prospects and privacy and everything in a way, so that's also a dimension to it.

(Deniz)

She points out how media can pulverise someone's life in regard to their private and professional life, which can also be implied to an organisation if they do not ensure fair treatment to all the involved parties. There are always individual destinies at stake, meaning vulnerable human beings are involved, which is enough reason for reacting properly and handling everything professionally. Especially if believing Anita's earlier statement about the feature of power struggles in academia. To be able to create a safe climate for all of their individual employees and manage to present their professionalism shows that organisations have a system that works. Besides, alongside creating a foundation for a robust organisation, they also build a respectable reputation.

Overall, the systematic work, leadership, and the safe climate are the three foundations that have been suggested as requirements in an organisation for them to combat sexual harassment. Policies and procedures are the most significant part of the systematic work that has been mentioned. Leadership is considered a foundation that requires the necessary training and support from the organisation in order to enhance the work of prevention. Lastly, a safe climate for the individual to feel the sense of safety and protection in their organisation has been found as essential to enable the culture to go towards change.

Discussion

In this section I will be discussing the findings from the analysis and illuminate them through existing theory and literature, for the purpose of endeavouring to answer the following research questions: *1. How is the phenomenon of sexual harassment understood in the higher education sector by the employees who work closely with it? and 2. How can a complex organisation take preventive measures against the sensitive and unwanted issue of sexual harassment?.* Initially, a short summary of the findings will be presented. Thereafter I will present a discussion about how sexual harassment is understood by the participants, and a discussion of preventive measures against sexual harassment. They will be discussed up against the previously presented theory and literature. Lastly, methodological implications will be considered before presenting practical implications and future research.

Summary of Findings

The findings of this thesis were identified through three superordinate themes: *perceptions of sexual harassment, the tools of prevention, and organisational foundations for preventions*. Prior to the theoretical discussion, these themes will be summarised next.

Perceptions of Sexual Harassment

This theme is considering the perceptions and understanding of the phenomenon of sexual harassment from the participants viewpoints. The findings illustrate participants way of defining and understanding the term of sexual harassment. Their understanding of the term is seemingly formed by the legal definition. Besides the legal perceptions, they also acknowledge different forms of sexual harassment, including physical, verbal, or non-verbal. Moreover, the participants also emphasise on the heavy importance of the subjective experience of someone who is sexually harassed. Findings also imply gender and power imbalances as two factors perceived as especially sensitive in terms of why sexual harassment occurs in higher education. PhD candidates are especially found to be a vulnerable group in the higher education context due to their sensitive position. Furthermore, findings also showcase the participants' perceptions on #Metoo's role in expanding the understanding of sexual harassment and getting the issue of the subtle sexual harassment issues, and the grey areas to the surface.

The Tools of Prevention

This theme begins to represent the preventive aspect of this thesis. It is presenting certain cultural tools that has the potential to have an impact on creating the desired workplace culture. The findings in the tool of support suggest the importance of creating a

culture of social support from colleagues. Not only support for someone once they experience sexual harassment, but also support from the preventive perspective. The findings in the tool of awareness suggest creating awareness regarding sexual harassment in an organisation. Awareness is also associated with creating knowledge around power positions for people to understand their roles and their impact. Most importantly, awareness is considered as an essential tool to have in order to create learning and memory in an organisation, for them to tackle and prevent sexual harassment.

Organisational Foundations for Prevention

This theme continues with the preventive aspect of this thesis. The findings of this theme disclose that organisations need to have certain foundations in place. Findings emphasises the importance of policies, procedures, and systems. Also, good systems, policies and procedures are found to be helpful in creating a sense of security for those in the vulnerable positions. Additionally, leaders and managers are highlighted as a fundamental foundation. The most vital findings here are that this foundation of leaders and managers need more support and training when it comes to handling cases, as well as working preventively with sexual harassment. Moreover, the safe climate is found to be an essential foundation for organisations. Organisations need to protect and ensure fair treatment to their employees who are vital resources for them. The importance of learning and remembering from failed and succeeded experiences in order to take better preventive actions in the organisation, has also emerged as significant in this theme.

Understanding Sexual Harassment

One purpose of this thesis was to explore how the phenomenon of sexual harassment is understood by employees who work closely with sexual harassment in the higher education sector. Literature emphasises the importance of defining and understanding sexual harassment as a term, especially since there is a lack of clarity around it. It is stated that without clarity around what sexual harassment constitutes, it is less likely that people will report incidents, and employees will keep being unaware of how sexual harassment operates in the workplace (Minnotte & Legerski, 2019). Despite the variations and unclarity of definitions, gender, coercion, and unequal power relations are some factors that has a tendency to be highlighted in the literature as the core of this phenomenon (Kensbock et al., 2015; Minnotte & Legerski, 2019), which are also core factors in the findings. A tri-partite model of sexual harassment behaviours (Fitzgerald et al., 1995), along with some models on the sociocultural notions of

gender and power, can be implemented in most of the findings that emerged for this purpose of the thesis.

Legal and Sociocultural Understanding

The findings indicate that the understanding of sexual harassment is not perfectly aligned with all the participants. Some of them refer to the law in order to feel that they have an approximately correct perception of it, while others contemplate on the term on its own. One of the findings showed that majority of the participants understood sexual harassment through a legal perception. According to the Norwegian law, sexual harassment is illegal. There are several laws in Norway that covers sexual harassment (Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act, 2017; Working Environment Act, 2005), where the Working Environment Act (2005) is the one that is mostly referred to by the participants. The Working Environment Act (2005) does not only cover sexual harassment, but also make employers liable to secure a healthy working environment. A healthy environment also includes the psychosocial environment and the one idea that most scholars do agree on is that that sexual harassment is a psychological experience based on a sexually undesired, offensive, and threatening behaviour at the workplace (Cantisano, Domínguez, & Depolo, 2008; Herrera et al., 2018). That sexual harassment is a psychological and psychosocial environmental issue at the workplace is a basic perception of all the participant. Moreover, the participants are undoubtedly aware of the severity level of sexual harassment due to their legal association, which also covers the psychological aspect and they seem to be are aware of the employers' duty of preventing sexual harassment accordingly.

It is especially the quid pro quo sexual harassment, known as *sexual coercion* in the tri-partite model, that is derived into the legal perspective (Burn, 2019; Kabat-Farr & Crumley, 2019). The findings which reflect around power imbalances as one mechanism behind sexual harassment can be explained by the *sexual coercion* perspective of the tri-partite model. The participants use PhD candidates to illustrate these imbalances in higher education sector, who are in the position to be exposed to *sexual coercion* by superiors, also referred to as coercive power from the *social power theory*. PhD candidates' vulnerable position is mentioned at several points in the findings and is considered an important discovery for the participants' understanding of sexual harassment in the context of higher education. This finding goes in line with the *vulnerable victim hypothesis* as the PhD candidates are low in both sociocultural power and social status in a higher educational setting, which can also be explained by the *power threat model.* According to this model they are prone to be exposed to sexual harassment due to the hierarchical nature of higher

education, that allows for even larger power imbalances (Burn, 2019; McLaughlin et al., 2012). Next to power imbalances, gender is also perceived as a mechanism behind sexual harassment and such behaviour is prone to be amplified in contexts where women challenge the power of men (Minnotte & Legerski, 2019). This particular finding indicates a perception that sexual harassment behaviours in higher education can have the tendency to derive from *gender harassment* and is also in line with Berdahl's (2007) theory that sexual harassment is a result of sex-based social status. These findings of gender and power as underlying sexual harassment mechanisms, display that the participants form their understanding of the phenomenon also through sociocultural perspectives (Burn, 2019).

The Grey Areas and #MeToo

In addition to understanding the term through law and sociocultural perspectives, the participants also describe different forms of sexual harassment, including physical, verbal, and non-verbal. This is in line with the definition that is commonly applied in the European Union (EU) and in the Nordic countries (European Institute for Gender Equality, n.d.). While the definitions do not emphasise individually on the different forms, the participants elaborate on the differences. The findings show that physical is considered a very clear and explicit form of sexual harassment, while the verbal and non-verbal forms of sexual harassment were understood as somewhat unclear in some cases. These cases that were of uncertainty were referred to as the grey areas of sexual harassment. This brings up the unclarity around the term of sexual harassment again, where the individuals understand it differently, especially when the behaviour is not explicit to an outsider. To derive from the tri-partite model, these might be explained from the *unwanted sexual attention* perspective, and to an extent also the *gender harassment* perspective. While the aforementioned *sexual coercion* perspective explicitly asks for a favour in return for rewards, these two perspectives implicitly create an uncomfortable situation for the harassed person by provoking a hostile working environment (Burn, 2019; Kabat-Farr & Crumley, 2019). The findings imply that the participants perceive the grey areas of sexual harassment to induce such hostile environment. However, even though a situation is uncomfortable for an individual and even though it effects the working environment, the participants are aware that there is still a certain rule for what can be referred to as sexual harassment. Thus, it can be difficult to pinpoint it as sexual harassment when the act or behaviour is somewhat unclear even though the law forbids it, which is why a mere legal definition of the phenomenon may not be enough in the attempt to understand it. This is demonstrated in the literature where definitions of sexual harassment are taken from different perspectives, and perhaps also why there is no agreement on a single clear definition

(Herrera et al., 2018). The findings also indicate that this uncertainty that is created around sexual harassment by the grey area incidents does not only put a psychological weight on the person who has experienced it, but it also makes the preventive work even more challenging with the ambiguity involved.

#MeToo is another finding in the analysis. According to the participants, the #MeToo movement brought the subtle sexual harassment behaviours and the grey areas of sexual harassment to the surface. It is found to be one of the reasons why those women who were uncertain why they felt uncomfortable in some situations finally began to understand that this was actually *gender harassment*, or *unwanted sexual attention*, and perhaps even *sexual coercion.* #MeToo basically brought visibility to sexual harassment and its prevalence in the workplace context and has awakened organisational and political actions to prevent sexual harassment (Minnotte & Legerski, 2019). Along with this and due to the constant reference to #MeToo, one finding of this analysis is that sexual harassment is perceived and understood practically as a synonym to #MeToo.

Preventive Measures Against Sexual Harassment

The main focus of this thesis is the preventive work against sexual harassment in the higher education sector, which is important to look at due to the complex nature of higher education institutions and their close relationship with the society. The key purpose was to explore how a complex organisation can take preventive measures against the sensitive and unwanted nature of sexual harassment. Literature emphasises on the importance of policies and procedures in order to combat sexual harassment, and also recognises training as effective means if correctly applied (Minnotte & Legerski, 2019). More specifically civility training and bystander interventions are highlighted as training approaches (Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2018), where the finding of support as a tool is addressed. Both training and policies and procedures are important findings in the analysis. The lack of effective strategies at appropriate times are argued to be a reason why negative environments consisting of sexual harassment are allowed to flourish (Mcdonald et al., 2015). Thus, the model of prevention and response strategies provided by Mcdonald et al. (2015) can be implemented to explore the findings of how preventive actions can be taken effectively. Additional two organisational considerations in order to work towards proper and effective measures are also found to be related to this key purpose of the thesis; safe psychological climate and organisational memory. The first two have a cultural focus, while the latter embarks on the importance of knowledge sharing in higher education (Feiz et al., 2019).

Acknowledge Organisational Inadequacies and Improvements

Findings show that participants consider higher education institutions as complex organisations due to the way they are organised with several faculties and numerous institutes. Hence, they consist of many sub-entities with multiple connections between them, creating dynamic relationships with systems that are coevolutionary (Pinheiro & Young, 2017). Findings also show that higher education sector also have a certain distinctive concern, such as the PhD candidates who are in a vulnerable position and easy targets for sexual harassment. Additionally, it is stated by participants that although even one sexual harassment case is one too many and the aim is to have zero, sexual harassment is not a frequent reported case in the sector. This makes sexual harassment in higher education a sensitive issue classified under the dimension of *harm* (Jehn & Jonsen, 2010). They occur rarely and may not even disrupt or unsettle the whole institution, however it has a damaging effect on those involved, and on the organisational reputation. Literature find a lack of proactive and coordinated responses to negative workplace behaviours as partly reasons why negative environments are allowed to flourish (Mcdonald et al., 2015). According to the participants, the complex nature of higher education leads to differences in practices and how certain issues are approached. Therefore, it is important to understand these characteristics of an organisation and its position in terms of sexual harassment, in order to attempt to work towards prevention of it. In the model of prevention and response strategies (Mcdonald et al., 2015), there are some primary tools that are described as primary strategies, which have mostly been used to combat sexual harassment in the workplace. These are laws, and policies and procedures, combined with training (Mcdonald et al., 2015; Quick & McFadyen, 2017). Although these primary tools are commonly applied, sexual harassment is still a persisting workplace phenomenon, also despite being prohibited by law (Mcdonald et al., 2015). This indicates that there is room for improvement. These tools have correspondingly emerged in the findings of the thesis as important functions. They are already existing in higher education institutes, but as per the findings and literature, they require some different approaches, including more focus on the cultural aspect of prevention.

Establish and Invest in Organisational Foundations

Policies and Procedures. Official complaint filing procedures, strong anti-harassment policies, and harassment training have been recognised as effective mechanisms in the literature for the purpose of preventing sexual harassment (Minnotte & Legerski, 2019). One participant points out how #MeToo most likely made organisations to go through solid reviews of their internal processes. So, these mechanisms should be theoretically established

in most likely all institutions. Nevertheless, that does not necessarily mean they are well established in the system in order to assist in embedding additional preventive work in the organisation. Participants emphasise that policies and procedures need to be part of a system that works, and a system which is aware of the fact that employees need to be reminded of them continuously. If such systematic foundation is strong, there must be room to add new components in there, like frequently repeating certain policies and procedures for either the same employees or at least for the newly appointed. Findings also elaborate that prevention is not only important prior to incidents occurring, and participants also suggest the importance of policies and procedures once incidents are reported, meaning the practices of them. Norms and practices are additional components of prevention that are considered important to pay attention to (Burn, 2019). While policies and procedures fit into the *primary prevention* category of the prevention model, practises or case handling fit better into the category of *secondary prevention* (Mcdonald et al., 2015). Even though completely removing sexual harassment is a main concern for prevention, it is also important to prevent further escalation once an incident has occurred and become aware. The suggested finding of forming well established policies and procedures becomes even more enhanced in regard to case handling due to the heightened sensitivity when the situation is real, opposed to when prevention is focusing on fictive, potential situations. Without these systems in place preventive work of any manner, whether systematic or cultural, just becomes floating ideas without any ground to hold

Leadership – Training and Support. Moreover, literature states that organisations can ensure transparency and accountability by having effective policies against sexual harassment (Kabat-Farr & Crumley, 2019). Alongside policy environments, effective leadership is also considered critical for responding to and preventing sexual harassment (Minnotte & Legerski, 2019), not least for creating a sound working environment. Leadership emerged as another vital finding that is essential as an organisational foundation in order to work preventively with sexual harassment. To implement and establish strong anti-harassment policies and training, strong support from leaders and managers is required (Burn, 2019). Complementary, the participants brought up the attention to the struggles of leaders and managers. Managers have a lot of responsibilities, which is why it can become difficult to aim the work towards one focus. Hence, they also require support in working with and take actions against sensitive issues like sexual harassment, which the organisation has to invest in. The prevention model by Mcdonald et al. (2015) has *management* as one of three functions where this particular function describe key strategies for those with authority and how they

should prevent and intervene. According to the model training is the main essence for *management* in the *primary prevention* classification, inter alia, sexual harassment training, conflict management, emotional skills. Training in higher education can be of significance due to the hierarchical system, which have leaders and managers on several levels. Proper training is considered to minimise sexual harassment by increasing knowledge around the organisational policies and procedures and create better understanding of what constitutes sexual harassment (Roehling & Huang, 2018). Thus, adequate training can improve this organisational foundation of leadership and management by enhancing their competency. This can be of uttermost help for higher education institutions to have in order to take further steps to prevent sexual harassment. Also, findings suggest using awareness as a tool for prevention, particularly in terms of being aware about the work role. The importance of developing and practicing empathy through training is especially considered important for those who have power in their work roles (Tenbrunsel et al., 2019), which leaders and managers automatically have once they are appointed in these positions. Participants elaborated on this notion of being unaware of the power a job position comes with. Thus, through training they can be made aware of the responsibility of their position, so that they do not make the mistake of asserting power due to the unawareness, which they can be enlightened about through the system. One participant pointed out the importance of role understanding in regard to knowing what impact attitudes, behaviours, statement and claims of leaders can have on others. Thus, enhancing the importance of proper, targeted and adequate training for leaders. *Civility training* may have a potential in regard to role understanding, as a it is stated to create norms of mutual understanding (Walsh & Magley, 2019). Also, *civility training* focus on how leaders and employees should behave as opposed how they should not, which can be a different approach to the traditional sexual harassment trainings. Hence it can add a different knowledge to leaders who can subsequently assist in permeating this knowledge in the organisation.

The Safe Climate. In additions to policy, procedures, and training, there was also another finding that was considered as an important organisational foundation: the safe climate. This finding goes in line with Walker et al. (2019) who argue that organisations need to focus on the organisational climate, more particularly on the psychological safety climate, which is actually distinguished as a "foundational climate" by Schneider et al. (1998). Participants talk about the vulnerability of speaking up or reporting an incident due to the fear of professional retaliations. This can be an effort especially for women who can be labelled as "troublemakers", or for the PhD candidates who fear to lose their careers. A psychological

safety climate is ensuring safety about feeling safe at work when speaking up without fearing repercussions (Walker et al., 2019). If an organisation can create such a climate and sense of safety, employees can report without fear and incidents can be prevented from escalating. When higher numbers of reporting occur, an organisation can use the statistics to understand the prevalence and pattern of sexual harassment at that particular workplace, hence better and targeted preventive measures can be developed. Findings also covers the person who is accused for harassment. Policies and procedures ensure due processes for all parties in a sexual harassment matter as the employer is obliged to maintain fair treatment (Hudson, 2018). Some participants pointed out the leader responsibility of proper investigation and attending to both sides. Complementary to this finding, psychological safety has been indicated to have a positive relationship with positive leader relations and colleague support (Frazier et al., 2017). Seemingly, creating a safe climate in the organisation can also have an effect for those who have been claimed to harass as they may feel a sense of safety and feel ensured that they will, in fact, be treated fairly at their workplace.

Improve the Cultural Preventive Actions

Findings suggest certain tools of prevention in order to improve the culture of an organisation, which can certainly be affected by a negative environment. These tools may enable employees and the organisation to work together towards the goal of prevention once an organisation has established important foundations, as formerly discussed. One such important tool is support. The findings emphasise on the notion of social support, which can be from authorities and from colleagues. Training is considered essential here as well. Both *civility training,* which was aforementioned in terms of leadership training, and *bystander interventions* encourage pro-social behaviours (McDonald et al., 2016; Walsh & Magley, 2019), which have the potential to change cultures. However, *bystander interventions* target directly at social support and appears to be a promising approach towards the finding of support. It is implied in the findings, that support in the form of intervening when witnessing some form of sexual harassment can have the potential to change the culture. A witness has the potential to confront and halt a harasser, report the event, and support the target (Bowes-Sperry & O'Leary-Kelly, 2005). This is in line with the training approach of *bystander interventions*, through which sexual harassment can become a sense of collective responsibility and encourage recognition and reporting of it (Lipnic, 2016). Nevertheless, the likelihood of *bystander interventions* to take place are argued to be driven by certain features, which are a part of the workplace culture, such as the tolerance level of sexual harassment (McDonald et al., 2016; McMahon & Banyard, 2012). On the other hand, *bystander*

interventions are considered to have a communicating role in changing the culture that supports sexual harassment (Ryan & Wessel, 2012). Kabat-Farr & Crumley (2019) suggest that in order to actually have an effect on this culture, colleagues and peers must feel empowered and comfortable in order to intervene and speak up. Thus, the foundation of a psychological safety climate is required. As aforementioned, psychological safety climate have found a positive relation with colleague support (Frazier et al., 2017). Colleagues have the potential to foster a psychological safety by creating certain norms of behaviour (Walker et al., 2019). To be able to communicate, intervene, and sanction each other by getting together and decide on social norms in the group is mentioned as a mean of support in the findings. This way colleagues can communicate to figure out how they want things to be in their work environment and consequently create an environment of support. Thus, colleagues can go together to unwelcome mistreatment and welcome reporting and sanctioning of sexual harassment (Walker et al., 2019). The four classifications of *bystander interventions* (Bowes-Sperry & O'Leary-Kelly, 2005) show that even though people intervene, they may not intervene immediate enough, which can be due to lack of sense of responsibility (Burn, 2019). It is suggested to implement mandatory interventions from employees through policies, which can perhaps enhance the sense of responsibility over time. Furthermore, *bystander interventions* are also argued to take place if people are able to reduce their ambiguity around the understanding of sexual harassment (Burn, 2019). This enhances the importance of the previously discussed section of the thesis. The findings suggest support as a cultural preventive action that can be taken once the organisational foundations are set. For this reason, support can fit into the prevention model's *tertiary prevention* classification, which tackles long-term responses to sexual harassment, and support is meant to be there for the long run.

Enhance Organisational Awareness, Knowledge and Memory

Another discovery made by the findings of the thesis is that through systems and communication, organisations can and should create an organisational memory. Due to sexual harassment being an issue that occur rarely in the higher education, the struggle of having a lack of knowledge about handling the issue of sexual harassment was revealed. Therefore, knowledge sharing about sexual harassment cases and prevention strategies among employees throughout the institutions should be applied. As mentioned formerly, one of the tools of prevention that emerged in the findings is awareness, without which the tool of support can be inadequate. It was earlier discussed in regard to leadership and being aware of roles in the workplace. Additional to this, constant awareness about sexual harassment is considered

important in order to keep an organisation on top of its game. This can be regarding the societal status of the issue, about the status in the organisation, about policies and procedures, or about the preventive work. To share and transform personal knowledge into organisational knowledge is considered important so that organisations can learn so that they can work together to improve and create better outcomes (Feiz et al., 2019; Lara & Salas-Vallina, 2017). The process of knowledge sharing, which enables organisational learning, ultimately produces an organisational memory on the different levels of a complex organisation, such as a higher education institution. According to the literature, organisational memory conserves its experiences through routines, so it may actually already exist in the organisation. However, all the actors in the organisation that are a part of different subcultures, subgroups, and subunits may be unaware of this available support at their organisation that can be approached, when they lack proper communication and awareness about it. It is revealed through the findings that leaders and managers find it difficult to handle sexual harassment cases once they appear because they do not have enough training of real cases due to the relatively few cases that occur in the higher education sector. Although they have policies and procedure in theory, all cases are different in practice. According to Langenmayr (2016) organisational memory only stores those routines that are frequently used and thus they become easily accessible, while the parts that are seldom used, are easily forgotten. The 'storage bin' model of memory by Walsh and Ungson (1991) theoretically describe how organisations can use information from their past and implement it in their future through *acquisition, retention, and retrieval.* With this in mind, it is suggested that organisations share and *acquire* knowledge about all the work on sexual harassment in the organisation. *Acquiring* and sharing experience may create learning, and thus build and *retain* an organisational memory of good and bad practices over time in their 'storage bins', which can then be *retrieved* at any point it is needed or required. Organisational memory should perhaps be a separate entity along with the prevention model, which can boost the *monitoring* function of the model.

Methodological Implications

A research study needs to consider methodological implications in order to ensure its quality and trustworthiness. Four criteria have been reviewed as indicators of quality in qualitative research: validity, reliability, generalisability, and transparency (Tjora, 2017). I have therefore decided to use these criteria as a basis to look into the methodological implications of this thesis.

Validity

Validity considers the study's truth value and consistency, which is also related to reliability (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). It is important that the process of data collection and analysis is clearly and systematically explained for the reader. This is to give a true picture of the method and specify the process of how the researcher landed on the findings of the study, which I have done in the method section. Moreover, being a novice researcher can be considered a weakness, due to which I kept an active attempt of not asking any leading questions during the interviews. The concern of being a novice researcher was also tackled by including the two cases into the interview guide and having the participants discuss specific issues through them, instead of being limited to direct questions. This way the validity of the data collected was ensured. To keep a true value of the data material, it is important to clearly and accurately present participants' perspectives (Noble & Smith, 2015). An audio recorder was used when conducting the interviews, which were then transcribed verbatim. Exact verbatim transcripts helped to support the findings of the thesis through direct quotes of the participants in the analysis. This way my subjective interpretations did not affect the participants' statements, while it also generates stronger validity by giving a visible voice to the participants (Tjora, 2017).

Another important part of validity is reflexivity. It is impossible for a researcher to stay neutral and leave their background and biases out of the understanding of how data is received, read and interpreted (Smith et al., 2009). Therefore, when analysis is generated through interpretation, a researcher has to reflect on how this involvement may influence the research to ensure validity (Tjora, 2017). Thus, it has been significant for me to consider my personal part in this thesis.

Reflexivity. My interest in the topic of sexual harassment is a result of my strong connection to the idea of women empowerment and equal opportunities. However, I had relatively little knowledge about the subject other than through mainstream media and the #MeToo movement. Thus, I acquired knowledge about sexual harassment through previous research and literature, before and during writing this thesis. Additionally, through my internship in the second semester, I became aware of this topic being of interest in the higher education sector. My knowledge about this sector was mostly gained through the internship. The personal and theoretical knowledge I gained was beneficial for the initial forming of my interview guide and for which themes it should include. I feel that my limited knowledge let me keep an open and explorative mindset for what data could emerge from the interviews, and subsequently become significant for the analysis. However, it can also be considered a

weakness. My limited knowledge can possibly have led to a narrow understanding, and as a result kept my analysis restricted from other possibilities. Still, I believe that the inductive nature of my thesis has created an openness and allowed for any categories to be generated. My limited prior knowledge has also given me the opportunity to have more focus on the organisational psychological perspective. Moreover, because I am a woman myself of an Asian cultural background, where gender and power inequalities are of a bigger problem than Norway, I acknowledge that I had a possible bias. It could have restrained me from understanding that this is a complex and sensitive issue with different viewpoints. However, by being aware of this bias I was able to keep as neutral standpoint as possible, both while collecting the data and while interpreting it. This is especially evident by the very last subordinate theme of my analysis, where the protection and safety for an accused harasser is also highlighted.

Reliability

Next to truth value and consistency, reliability considers whether the results revealed in the research, are answering the questions attempted to be answered (Tjora, 2017). Due to the sensitive nature of the topic sexual harassment, there is a possibility that participants were not completely comfortable talking about it. Additionally, as some of the questions were related to their own workplace, it might also have affected and regulated their openness in regard to answering the questions. This is a weakness of data collection through interviews as the presence of the researcher can have such restraining effect (Tjora, 2017). That being said, the information that was acquired through the interviews has been enough in terms of the aim of this thesis. Moreover, the interviews were conducted in Norwegian and the quotes were translated to English in the analysis section. This translation may have affected how the meaning and interpretation is grasped. While some translations may give meaning to me because I know their exact points, they may not come through as authentic for the reader. This concern has been attempted to be tackled through having supervisor and other associates read through the analysis.

Generalisability

Generalisability considers whether the findings has any relevance beyond the particular research and context which has been studied (Kvale og Brinkmann, 2015: Tjora, 2017). In other words, whether the findings are applicable to any other contexts, settings, or groups (Noble & Smith, 2015). For this it is important to provide extensive information about the research, such as the research approach, process, and context, so that generalisability can

be considered by the reader (Morrow, 2005). The data of this thesis has been collected from six participants working at different higher education institutions in Norway. While all the participants have the same work context, they have different positions and roles at their workplace, which can be good for the generalisability of the findings. However, at the same time the different positions and roles can also be considered a weakness as the study is not endeavouring deeper knowledge from participants from the same job position and similar knowledge. That could potentially increase the generalisability of this thesis. Additionally, regardless of this, the overall low number of six participants may have a decreasing impact on the generalisability. On the other hand, this can be argued by the fact that the six participants did actually manage to create a saturation point for the findings of the thesis. Furthermore, according to Morrow (2005) qualitative research is contextually dependent, thus it is rarely generalised and will always be different for different organisations. Context has the possibility of influencing the findings, but one advantage of qualitative data is that the research can include contextual information (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Complementary to this, I have included a contextual information about higher education as a complex organisation in terms of sexual harassment in the analysis section. Through this and by comparing the findings with theory and literature, it is possible to look for generalisability with other contexts.

Transparency

Transparency is related to a precise presentation of the research by giving proper insight into the research and its findings. Through transparency the reader self has the possibility to evaluate the quality of the thesis, which can be described as one of the most important criteria of quality in terms of research (Meyrick, 2006; Morrow, 2005). Transparency involves presenting a clear description of every aspect of the research, from the initial framework, through the developments of the method, and to the reporting of the findings (Noble & Smith, 2015). It may include that the researcher explains how the analysis gives a foundation to the conclusions that the researcher ends up with (Meyrick, 2006). This is done by clarifying the basis of the interpretations. I consider IPA the base of my interpretations and analysis, which was thoroughly explained in the method section, also incorporating the step by step procedure of the conducted analysis (Thagaard, 2013). This way it is provided an insight into the process of reaching the conclusions and transparency is generated.

Practical Implications and Future Research

      This research thesis has added to the notion of sexual harassment in the workplace. More precisely, to the preventive aspect in the higher education sector, which is considered a complex organisation due to the many levels and large nature. The study has contemplated on some important factors of prevention that has emerged as a requirement for a large and complex organisation in order to tackle sensitive issues like sexual harassment. There has been made suggestions of how these factors can support a large organisation to prevent sexual harassment and an attempt to place them into the model of prevention by McDonald et al. (2015). Although, the findings of this thesis are in the context of higher education sector, it is also possible to apply them to other large and complex organisations. To develop further on these findings, future research can widen the research. It is possible to look into how other sectors consisting of large organisations work towards prevention of sexual harassment, or other sensitive issues. Furthermore, they can potentially compare and contrast different practices from different sectors. It is also possible to look deeper into some of the main findings. For instance, investigate how organisations establish their policies and procedures and how they actually work in practice opposed to the theoretical guidelines. Moreover, perhaps the suggested trainings like *bystander interventions* can be examined in a higher education institution to be evaluated by leaders, managers, and regular employees. This way it is possible to assess whether such training methods are worth implementing at all or not. The suggestion of acknowledging inadequacies of an organisation, such as the dilemmas of PhD candidates, was found to be significantly important in order to work with prevention. This should be considered by any large and complex organisation so that they can work to improve the inadequacies, thus preventive work can be targeted better and correctly.

      The suggestions in this thesis are merely theoretical and based on interpretations. Therefore, it can be beneficial for further research to continue investigating how the complex organisations can tackle sensitive issues, such as sexual harassment. Even though it has been revealed that sexual harassment is not as prevailing in the higher education sector comparatively to others, UHRMOT and the Kif-committee has required research on better measures, problem solving, and prevention. Perhaps alternative research is another way of investigating this issue. An idea can be to add some emotional aspects in the research to better understand how to tackle sexual harassment issues and the emotions it is surrounded with, then perhaps implement emotional training in the prevention model.

      Moreover, sexual harassment in itself is a topic that still requires more research, as it is a phenomenon that makes an individual person vulnerable. Those who are afflicted end up

getting serious impact and great consequences in their lives. Hence, it is still an issue in need of attention and serious combat. The sensitive nature of this topic creates many understandings and various definitions and is not necessarily perceived on the same level. More research is still required to create better, equal and general perceptions of it. Future research may continue to bring awareness and create a better understanding of sexual harassment for it to lean more towards a general understanding.

Conclusion

The purpose of the present research thesis was to explore how the phenomenon of sexual harassment is understood by employees in the higher education sector and how complex organisations can work with preventive measures against sexual harassment. The emphasis on this phenomenon was brought to light by the movement of #MeToo. It led to more awareness around sexual harassment in the workplace and thus, also in the academia. Higher education institutions are considered as complex organisations due to the many levels, dynamics consisting of several actors, and systems being coevolutionary. Sexual harassment in the higher education sector was found to belong to the dimension of *harm*, not occurring too often, but having severe impact on the involved parties once it takes place. With this in mind, it was found important to look into prevention of sexual harassment.

For the first purpose of the thesis the findings revealed that sexual harassment is initially more likely to be understood through a legal perception. Two Norwegian laws were found significant to this, the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act, (2017) and the Working Environment Act, (2005). Sexual harassment is illegal by these laws, and the latter also consists of a legislation emphasising on a certain duty of employers to secure a healthy psychosocial environment. This also emerged as a basic perception in the findings. Additionally, gender and power imbalances were discovered as two significant mechanisms behind sexual harassment, which supported the understanding of the phenomenon. These imbalances put an emphasis on the PhD candidates as an especially vulnerable group in the higher education context. Being in a dependency relationship with supervisors puts them in a risk of *sexual coercion* and being targets of professional retaliation. Being young and female in addition is considered as risky. Moreover, #MeToo and these grey areas are two findings that explain the nature and range of sexual harassment. These consists of the explicit and physical sexual harassment behaviours on one end, and the implicit and unclear behaviours on the other. The latter is referred to as the grey areas. #MeToo is considered as a movement that brought awareness to the uncertain sexual harassment behaviours and created a change in how sexual harassment was perceived. Thus, the findings indicate that the participants perceived sexual harassment with a new understanding consisting of grey area issues because of the impact of the #MeToo movement.

For the second and key purpose of the thesis findings revealed that organisations need to have certain organisational foundations in place for them to be able to embark on further preventive work that can last for a longer period of time. Some suggestions of how the measures of the findings can be implemented are provided in the discussion. Even before

these foundations are considered, it is suggested that organisations should *acknowledge organisational inadequacies and improvements*, such as the complex nature of higher education institutions and the vulnerable group of PhD candidates. This is considered important because despite laws, policies, procedures, and trainings, sexual harassment still remains a persisting workplace issue. With a better organisational knowledge, it might be possible to create better and targeted measures. Further, through the findings, it is suggested to *establish and invest in organisational foundations.* The findings revealed these foundations to be policies and procedures, leadership – training and support, and the safe climate. By having these established an organisation can create a robust base, which can be an asset to keep working preventively. Furthermore, findings discovered the importance of cultural prevention work, which is why the supplementary suggestion is to *improve the cultural preventive actions*. Social support by colleagues in the form of *bystander interventions*, enhanced by communicating, intervening, and speaking up regarding sexual harassment, were considered in this element. Lastly, a discovery in the findings also implied to create organisational learning and memory, and thus the suggestion to *enhance organisational awareness, knowledge and memory*. This is considered important because of the relatively rare cases of sexual harassment. To keep combating it, an organisation needs to learn from experience and memory about what has been working the way it is desired.

The combination of working with cultural prevention and establishing organisational foundations have emerged as a way of tackling prevention work with sexual harassment in a complex organisation. An aware culture can easier work on their communication skills, through which they can build a supportive environment. In other words, supporting by communicating with each other in the organisation, we can create a much-needed awareness of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

This thesis is adding awareness to sexual harassment and its understanding related to higher education sector. Moreover, it is providing some suggestions to how complex organisations can take preventive measures against sexual harassment. The suggestions discovered in the findings are mere abstract recommendations, hoping to add some knowledge that can be used in the combat against occupational sexual harassment.

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Appendices

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Appendix 1: NSD Approval

NSD NORSK SENTER FOR FORSKNINGSDATA

NSD sin vurdering

Prosjekttittel

Seksuell Trakassering i UH-sektoren

Referansenummer

551616

Registrert

15.11.2019 av Shivali Singh - shivalis@stud.ntnu.no

Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon

Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet NTNU / Fakultet for samfunns- og utdanningsvitenskap (SU) / Institutt for psykologi

Prosjektansvarlig (vitenskapelig ansatt/veileder eller stipendiat)

Anne Iversen, anne.iversen@ntnu.no, tlf: 73597481

Type prosjekt

Studentprosjekt, masterstudium

Kontaktinformasjon, student

Shivali Singh, shivali_s91@hotmail.com, tlf: 98069092

Prosjektperiode

01.12.2019 - 30.06.2020

Status

22.11.2019 - Vurdert

Vurdering (1)

22.11.2019 - Vurdert

Det er vår vurdering at behandlingen av personopplysninger i prosjektet vil være i samsvar med personvernlovgivningen så fremt den gjennomføres i tråd med det som er dokumentert i meldeskjemaet 22.11.2019 med vedlegg.

Behandlingen kan starte.

MELD VESENTLIGE ENDRINGER
Dersom det skjer vesentlige endringer i behandlingen av personopplysninger, kan det være nødvendig å melde dette til NSD ved å oppdatere meldeskjemaet. Før du melder inn en endring, oppfordrer vi deg til å

lese om hvilke type endringer det er nødvendig å melde:
https://nsd.no/personvernombud/meld_prosjekt/meld_endringer.html

Du må vente på svar fra NSD før endringen gjennomføres.

TYPE OPPLYSNINGER OG VARIGHET
Prosjektet vil behandle alminnelige kategorier av personopplysninger frem til 30.06.2020.

LOVLIG GRUNNLAG
Prosjektet vil innhente samtykke fra de registrerte til behandlingen av personopplysninger. Vår vurdering er at prosjektet legger opp til et samtykke i samsvar med kravene i art. 4 og 7, ved at det er en frivillig, spesifikk, informert og utvetydig bekreftelse som kan dokumenteres, og som den registrerte kan trekke tilbake. Lovlig grunnlag for behandlingen vil dermed være den registrertes samtykke, jf. personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a.

PERSONVERNPRINSIPPER
NSD vurderer at den planlagte behandlingen av personopplysninger vil følge prinsippene i personvernforordningen om:

- lovlighet, rettferdighet og åpenhet (art. 5.1 a), ved at de registrerte får tilfredsstillende informasjon om og samtykker til behandlingen
- formålsbegrensning (art. 5.1 b), ved at personopplysninger samles inn for spesifikke, uttrykkelig angitte og berettigede formål, og ikke viderebehandles til nye uforenlige formål
- dataminimering (art. 5.1 c), ved at det kun behandles opplysninger som er adekvate, relevante og nødvendige for formålet med prosjektet
- lagringsbegrensning (art. 5.1 e), ved at personopplysningene ikke lagres lengre enn nødvendig for å oppfylle formålet

DE REGISTRERTES RETTIGHETER
Så lenge de registrerte kan identifiseres i datamaterialet vil de ha følgende rettigheter: åpenhet (art. 12), informasjon (art. 13), innsyn (art. 15), retting (art. 16), sletting (art. 17), begrensning (art. 18), underretning (art. 19), dataportabilitet (art. 20).
NSD vurderer at informasjonen som de registrerte vil motta oppfyller lovens krav til form og innhold, jf. art. 12.1 og art. 13.

Vi minner om at hvis en registrert tar kontakt om sine rettigheter, har behandlingsansvarlig institusjon plikt til å svare innen en måned.

FØLG DIN INSTITUSJONS RETNINGSLINJER
NSD legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene i personvernforordningen om riktighet (art. 5.1 d), integritet og konfidensialitet (art. 5.1. f) og sikkerhet (art. 32).

For å forsikre dere om at kravene oppfylles, må dere følge interne retningslinjer og eventuelt rådføre dere med behandlingsansvarlig institusjon.

OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET
NSD vil følge opp ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet.

Lykke til med prosjektet!

Kontaktperson hos NSD: Gry Henriksen
Tlf. Personverntjenester: 55 58 21 17 (tast 1)

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Appendix 2: Information Sheet and Consent Form

<div style="border:1px solid">

Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet

Seksuell Trakassering i UH-sektoren?

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et masterprosjekt hvor formålet er å *belyse fenomenet seksuell trakassering i arbeidslivet, med fokus på forebyggende arbeid i Universitet og Høgskolesektoren (UH).* I dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

Formål
Dette er et masterprosjekt i arbeids- og organisasjonspsykologi ved NTNU. Formålet med prosjektet er å sette mer lys på fenomenet seksuell trakassering i arbeidslivet, konsekvensene det kan føre til og undersøke hvordan det arbeides forebyggende med denne problematikken i UH-sektoren. Alvorlighetsgraden til dette fenomenet reiste seg til overflaten i kjølvannet av #MeToo. Det har med tiden utvidet seg og ble dermed et stort fokus i UH-sektoren etter at flere tilfeller ble varslet om. En nasjonal kartlegging om mobbing og trakassering ble utført i begynnelsen av 2019 med de fleste institusjoner i Norge som deltagere. Resultatene har vist nødvendigheten og viktigheten med dette arbeidet. I tillegg har Kif-komiteen (Kjønnsbalanse og mangfold i forskning) og UHRMOT (Universitets- og høgskolerådets arbeidsgruppe mot mobbing og trakassering i UH-sektoren) pekt på behovet for forskning på dette området, både med tanke på bedre tiltak, problemløsing og forebygging.

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?
NTNU, Institutt for Psykologi ved førsteamanuensis Anne Iversen og masterstudent Shivali Singh er ansvarlige for prosjektet.

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?
Deltakere til forskningsprosjektet er valgt ut med tanke på roller som innebærer et nært forhold til arbeidet med seksuell trakassering på ulike institusjoner for høyere utdanning i Norge. Dette er ledere på ulike nivå og HR-ansatte som vil kunne bidra med ulike perspektiver på fenomenet og det forebyggende arbeidet.

HR-personalet vil bli kontaktet for å kunne sende ut informasjon og kontakte relevante- og aktuelle kandidater fra den enkelte institusjonen.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?
Hvis du velger å delta i dette prosjektet innebærer det å delta på et intervju som vil ta omtrent 50-60 minutter. Intervjuet vil inneholde spørsmål om dine tanker rundt seksuell trakassering som begrep, forebyggende arbeid, i tillegg til noen reflekterende spørsmål med eksempler/scenarioer/case. Det vil bli tatt lydopptak og muligens notater under intervjuet. Videre vil intervjuene bli transkribert ordrett og anonymisert.

Frivillig deltagelse
Det er frivillig å delta i dette masterprosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykke tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle opplysninger om deg vil da bli anonymisert. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg fra masterprosjektet.

Ditt personvern – oppbevaring og bruk av dine opplysninger
Personopplysningene du oppgir vil kun bli benyttet til formålene som er beskrevet i dette skrivet. Behandlingen av opplysningene vil være konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

</div>

Det er kun masterstudent Shivali Singh som vil ha tilgang til dine personidentifiserbare data. Navn og kontaktopplysninger vil bli lagret adskilt fra øvrige data og prosjektmaterialet. Dataene vil bli oppbevart på en kryptert minnepinne og en passord-beskyttet server på NTNU. De skriftlige intervjuene vil bli identifisert kun gjennom et kandidatnummer.

Hva skjer med opplysningene dine når vi avslutter forskningsprosjektet?
Prosjektet skal etter planen avsluttes vår/sommer 2020 og dermed vil opptakene og dine personidentifiserbare data slettes. De anonymiserte intervjuene vil oppbevares hos masterstudenten etter prosjektavslutning og være mulig å brukes i videre forskning ved behov.

Dine rettigheter
Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:
- innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert om deg,
- å få rettet personopplysninger om deg,
- få slettet personopplysninger om deg,
- få utlevert en kopi av dine personopplysninger (dataportabilitet), og
- å sende klage til personvernombudet eller Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger.

Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?
Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra NTNU, Institutt for psykologi har NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Hvor kan jeg finne ut mer?
Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:
- Institutt for Psykologi, ved førsteamanuensis Anne Iversen (anne.iversen@ntnu.no) og masterstudent Shivali Singh (shivalis@stud.ntnu.no)
- Vårt personvernombud ved NTNU er Thomas Helgesen (thomas.helgesen@ntnu.no)
- NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS, på epost (personverntjenester@nsd.no) eller telefon: 55 58 21 17.

Med vennlig hilsen

Prosjektansvarlig   *Eventuelt student*
(Forsker/veileder)

Samtykkeerklæring

Samtykke kan innhentes skriftlig (herunder elektronisk) eller muntlig. NB! Du må kunne dokumentere at du har gitt informasjon og innhentet samtykke fra de du registrerer opplysninger om. Vi anbefaler skriftlig informasjon og skriftlig samtykke som en hovedregel.

- *Ved skriftlig samtykke på papir, kan du bruke malen her.*
- *Ved skriftlig samtykke som innhentes elektronisk, må du velge en fremgangsmåte som gjør at du kan dokumentere at du har fått samtykke fra rett person (se veiledning på NSDs nettsider).*
- *Hvis konteksten tilsier at du bør gi muntlig informasjon og innhente muntlig samtykke (f.eks. ved forskning i muntlige kulturer eller blant analfabeter), anbefaler vi at du tar lydopptak av informasjon og samtykke.*

Hvis foreldre/verge samtykker på vegne av barn eller andre uten samtykkekompetanse, må du tilpasse formuleringene. Husk at deltakerens navn må fremgå.

Tilpass avkryssingsboksene etter hva som er aktuelt i ditt prosjekt. Det er mulig å bruke punkter i stedet for avkryssingsbokser. Men hvis du skal behandle særskilte kategorier personopplysninger og/eller de fire siste punktene er aktuelle, anbefaler vi avkryssingsbokser pga. krav om eksplisitt samtykke.

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet *Seksuell Trakassering i UH-sektoren* og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

☐ å delta i personlig intervju

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet, ca. vår/sommer 2020

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

Appendix 3: Interview Guide

Generelle spørsmål

- Alder
- Utdanning
- Hvor lenge har du jobbet i UH-sektoren?
- Hvor lenge har du vært ansatt i denne institusjonen?
- Hvilken stilling har du her?
  - Hva innebærer rollen din? Eks. arbeidsoppgaver
- Hvordan ser en spesifikk arbeidshverdag ut for deg?
- Hvor stor er avdelingen din?
  - Hvor mange kollegaer forholder du deg til i en typisk arbeidshverdag?

Seksuell Trakassering definering og status

- Hva legger du i begrepet 'seksuell trakassering?'
  - Hva med 'seksuell trakassering i arbeidslivet'?
  - Seksuell trakassering i UH-sektoren?
- Ville du sagt at verbale utsagn kan regnes som trakassering?
- Ville du sagt at ikke verbale (slik som lapper) kan regnes som trakassering?
- Hvor mye skal man kunne tåle?
- Tror du at det er kjønnsforskjeller med tanke på <u>hvem som trakasserer</u>? - Utdyp gjerne
- Tror du det er kjønnsforskjeller på <u>hvem som blir trakassert</u>? - Utdyp gjerne
- Vil du skille mellom mobbing og trakassering som to entiteter?
  - seksuell trakassering kommer under mobbing
  - eller; at de går inn i hverandre?
  - eventuelt andre tanker rundt det?
- Har dere varslingsrutiner (eller noe som ligner)? (Få konkrete beskrivelser)
  - Hva er målet/hensikten med disse rutinene?
  - Hvordan pleier dere å gjøre de kjent for nye ansatte/studenter?
  - Hvordan informeres nåværende ansatte og studenter om dem?
  - Hvor godt tror du disse rutinene er kjent på institusjonen?
  - Er ansatte bedre informert enn studentene, eller omvendt?
  - Hvis jeg spør 20 tilfeldige personer på institusjonen om å beskrive varslingsrutinene, ville jeg fått 20 rette/like svar?
- Hvis du i din arbeidshverdag måtte håndtere en sak som omhandlet seksuell trakassering, ville du ha klart å prioritere det?
  - Hvis ja, hvordan ville du prioritert det? (måtte du f.eks ha lagt fra deg de vanlige arbeidsoppgavene dine?)
  - Hvis nei, hvorfor ikke? Hva kreves for å håndtere slike saker? (f.eks ekstra tid)
- På hvilken måte har du personlig jobbet med seksuell trakassering? Både på arbeidsplassen din eller utenfor?
- Hvordan har denne organisasjonen generelt arbeidet med det?
- Hva er forskjellen mellom å arbeide med seksuell trakassering generelt i teorien og når organisasjonen faktisk blir oppmerksom på en hendelse som har skjedd?

Forebyggende arbeid

- Hva innebærer det for deg å jobbe forebyggende med seksuell trakassering?
- Vil du si at det jobbes forebyggende med seksuell trakassering på arbeidsplassen din? I så fall hvordan/hva er det som gjøres? (Få konkrete beskrivelser)
  - Hva er målet/hensikten med det arbeidet?
  - Hvor godt kjent er dette forebyggende arbeidet på institusjonen?
  - Hvem på institusjonen er involvert?
  - Hvem andre enn de involverte er klar over hva som gjøres?
  - Hvordan er det planlagt å gjøre ansatte/studenter kjent med arbeidet eller eventuelt de nye tiltakene som kommer? (hvis du er klar over det)
  - Når ting er på plass, skal det da være slik at hvis jeg spør 20 tilfeldige personer om rutinene så skal jeg få nærmest 20 like/rette svar?
- Hva er det som blir gjort annerledes enn det som var tidligere generelt i UH-sektoren?
- Hva er det som blir gjort annerledes enn det som var tidligere på arbeidsplassen din?
  - Er det gjort noen endringer i rutinene? - Hvis ja - Hvorfor akkurat de endringene?
  - Er det gjort noen helt nye tiltak som ikke eksisterte tidligere? Hvis ja - Hvorfor var de nødvendig?
  - Har eksisterende tiltak blitt bearbeidet? Hvis ja - Beskriv hvordan og hvorfor
  - Annet?
- Hva tenker du er viktig å tenke på i prosessen av et forebyggende arbeid? (visse faktorer)
  - Syns du institusjonen/de som jobber med det har tenkt på disse faktorene?
  - Hvis ja – hvordan? Eks. på en faktor som har vært relevant
  - Hvis nei – hvorfor ikke?
- Hva er det du syns er spesielt bra med arbeidet som gjøres? Forklar
- Er det eventuelt noe som kunne vært gjort annerledes eller bedre?
  - Hvis ja, hva er det som hindrer institusjonen fra å gjøre det?
- Opplever du at arbeidet er mest rettet mot de ansatte, studentene eller representerer begge?
- Hvor har dere hentet ut inspirasjonen til arbeidet deres? Andre organisasjoner? Andre lignende institusjoner? Eller annet?
- Er det noen andre du syns jobber spesielt bra med denne problematikken som du tenker hadde vært et godt eksempel å følge?
- Hvorfor trenger seksuell trakassering i UH-sektoren egen tilnærming og forskning når det gjelder forebygging? eller; Syns du seksuell trakassering i UH-sektoren krever egen tilnærming og forskning når det gjelder forebyggingsarbeid?

Case

Case 1

En kvinnelig ansatt mener å ha opplevd trakassering av seksuelle art fra en mannlig kollega som har kommet med verbale utsagn under uformelle situasjoner, slik som i gangene på arbeidsplassen. Det har vært utsagn som 'den toppen satt trangt og godt'. Den fornærmede har gestikulert og vist at hun ikke syns noe om det, men syns det er vanskelig å uttrykke det verbalt. Hun har tatt det opp med sin nærmeste leder, men får beskjed om at hun kanskje skal prøve å si fra selv først da det ikke er så mye ta tak i for ledelsen. Hun føler at det ikke blir tatt seriøst. Det går videre til at han i tillegg begynner å ta på henne, blant annet å stryke henne tilfeldig på ryggen og stirrer på henne når de går forbi hverandre. Han tilkaller henne til et

møte hvor hun syns den fysiske avstanden ble nærmest borte og stemningen i rommet var noe av det verste hun har opplevd. Da hun gikk ut derfra følte hun seg ekkel. Hun orker ikke å ta det med lederen sin denne gangen og politianmelder han. Det blir en sak, men blir til slutt henlagt på grunn av bevisets stilling. Arbeidsplassen ordner det slik at hun slipper å ha noen formelle oppgaver med han, men da de fortsatt må forholde seg til hverandre i arbeidshverdagen sitter hun igjen med ubehagelige arbeidsforhold. Dette både med tanke på det hun opplevde med han og nå i tillegg til at de har en politisak bak seg. Under et møte med lederen sin har hun blant annet sagt «Hva er vitsen med å varsle om slikt når det bare fører til at en ender opp med å føle seg krenket og enda mindreverdig?»

- Hva er dine umiddelbare tanker rundt her?
  - Hvor tenker du at trakasseringen begynner?
  - Når lederen sa 'at det ikke er mye å ta tak i', hva tenker du om dette?
- Kunne det ha blitt forhindret fra å eskalere seg til en politisak? I så fall, hvordan?
- Hvordan syns du arbeidsplassen skulle ha håndtert det?
- Har vært saker i media, blant annet om KHiO, som har latt saker gå for langt. Trakasserende ansatte har fått jobbe der i 10 år uten konsekvenser selv om ledelsen har vært klar over situasjonen gjennom blant annet varslinger.
  - Hvorfor tror du mange feier det litt bort slik de også gjør her i denne casen og lar det gå så langt?

Nå som den kvinnelige ansatte sitter igjen etter disse hendelsene og saken bak seg:
- Hvordan skal arbeidsplassen best mulig ta vare på den ansatte?
- I følge retningslinjene og rutinene på arbeidsplassen din, hvordan ville denne saken blitt tatt tak i her?
- Hvordan tror du dette tilfellet ville blitt tatt tak i på din arbeidsplass med tanke på rutinene dere har eller jobber med i dag?

Her sier kvinnen i fra og prøver å gjøre noe med situasjonen, men det er velkjent at mange ikke sier i fra:
- Hva tror du er grunnen til at mange velger å tie om slikt?
- Hva tenker du om det utsagnet til kvinnen?

Case 2

En kvinnelig doktorgradsstudent/stipendiat har hatt en mannlig veileder i rundt 2-3 år og har 1 år igjen. I løpet av den tiden har hun opplevd ubehagelige tilfeller. Tilfeller hvor han f. eks har søkt opp upassende nettsider med henne tilstede. Hun snakker med instituttet, de er klare over oppførselen hans, men mener at 'han bare er sånn' og ingenting blir gjort. Hun vil bytte veileder, men får beskjed av den eksisterende veilederen at dersom hun gjør det får hun ikke ta med noe av arbeidet sitt videre. Hun tar det med til fakultetet og de ordner et møte. Under møtet er det tydelig for representantene fra fakultetet at hun ikke kan jobbe med han. Hun får da tilbud om å få bytte veileder, endre prosjekt og starte på nytt. Han får ingen konsekvenser.

- Hva er dine umiddelbare tanker her?
- Hvorfor tror utfallet ble som det ble?
- Hvilke faktorer tror du spiller en rolle her?
- Tenker du at det var et rettferdig utfall? – hvorfor?

- Hva tror du skulle til for at veilederen skulle få konsekvenser?
- Hvordan syns du stipendiaten skulle gått frem for å kunne få en rettferdig vurdering?
- Syns du tiltakene dere har i dag er gode med tanke på denne situasjonen?
- Hvordan tror du dette tilfellet ville blitt tatt tak i på din arbeidsplass med tanke på rutinene dere har eller jobber med i dag?

#MeToo

- Hvor godt kjenner du til #MeToo? - Forklare/beskrive
- Hva legger du i det?
- Hva syns/føler du om den bevegelsen og alt som har kommet med det?
- Med tanke på per dags status, vil du si at #MeToo vipper mer mot noe positivt eller noe negativt? (for eksempel antall % positivt/negativt)
- Vil du si at det har blitt mer fokus på arbeidet med seksuell trakassering i UH-sektoren de siste årene etter #MeToo, enn det var tidligere?
  - Merker du at det er en forskjell på alvorlighetsgraden rundt dette arbeidet på denne institusjonen?
- Hvis ja på minst en av de to forrige spørsmålene
  - Hvorfor har det blitt sånn?
- Hva tenker du om #MeToo bevegelsen og media sin rolle rundt dette fokuset?

Reflekterende spørsmål

Det har vært ulike meninger om #MeToo, hvor noen mener at det har blitt dratt for langt. For eksempel har kvinnelige akademikere fått beskjed om å veilede studenter (da særlig mannlige studenter) med døren åpen. Mens andre mener at selv etter #MeeToo forekommer det slike saker, f. eks kartleggingen utført i UH-sektoren som har vist omfanget av dette problemet ble gjort en god stund etter at #MeToo fenomenet ble til.

- Hva er dine tanker rundt dette?
- Opplever/føler du at det i noen tilfeller kan være dratt for langt?
  - Hvis ja – har du noen andre eksempler?
- Noen andre tanker rundt #MeToo?

Man er klar over at det er individuelle forskjeller på hvor en grense går. Mens noen syns det kanskje bare er koselig å bli kalt 'søta' vil noen andre ikke synes noe om det. Og noen tåler ikke berøring ved for eksempel et lite vennlig stryk på skulderen/ryggen, mens andre kan tåle et klapp på rumpa.

- Hvor mye skal man kunne tåle?
- Hvor tenker du en generell eller universell grense går både verbalt, non-verbalt og fysisk? – en generell regel f. eks

Appendix 4: Cases from the Interview Guide

Case 1

En kvinnelig ansatt mener å ha opplevd trakassering av seksuelle art fra en mannlig kollega som har kommet med verbale utsagn under uformelle situasjoner, slik som i gangene på arbeidsplassen. Det har vært utsagn som 'den toppen satt trangt og godt'. Den fornærmede har gestikulert og vist at hun ikke syns noe om det, men syns det er vanskelig å uttrykke det verbalt. Hun har tatt det opp med sin nærmeste leder, men får beskjed om at hun kanskje skal prøve å si fra selv først da det ikke er så mye ta tak i for ledelsen. Hun føler at det ikke blir tatt seriøst. Det går videre til at han i tillegg begynner å ta på henne, blant annet å stryke henne tilfeldig på ryggen og stirrer på henne når de går forbi hverandre. Han tilkaller henne til et møte hvor hun syns den fysiske avstanden ble nærmest borte og stemningen i rommet var noe av det verste hun har opplevd. Da hun gikk ut derfra følte hun seg ekkel. Hun orker ikke å ta det med lederen sin denne gangen og politianmelder han. Det blir en sak, men blir til slutt henlagt på grunn av bevisets stilling. Arbeidsplassen ordner det slik at hun slipper å ha noen formelle oppgaver med han, men da de fortsatt må forholde seg til hverandre i arbeidshverdagen sitter hun igjen med ubehagelige arbeidsforhold. Dette både med tanke på det hun opplevde med han og nå i tillegg til at de har en politisak bak seg. Under et møte med lederen sin har hun blant annet sagt «Hva er vitsen med å varsle om slikt når det bare fører til at en ender opp med å føle seg krenket og enda mindreverdig?»

Case 2

En kvinnelig doktorgradsstudent/stipendiat har hatt en mannlig veileder i rundt 2-3 år og har 1 år igjen. I løpet av den tiden har hun opplevd ubehagelige tilfeller. Tilfeller hvor han f. eks har søkt opp upassende nettsider med henne tilstede. Hun snakker med instituttet, de er klare over oppførselen hans, men mener at 'han bare er sånn' og ingenting blir gjort. Hun vil bytte veileder, men får beskjed av den eksisterende veilederen at dersom hun gjør det får hun ikke ta med noe av arbeidet sitt videre. Hun tar det med til fakultetet og de ordner et møte. Under møtet er det tydelig for representantene fra fakultetet at hun ikke kan jobbe med han. Hun får da tilbud om å få bytte veileder, endre prosjekt og starte på nytt. Han får ingen konsekvenser

Appendix 5: Examples of Coding Tables

Table 1: Grouping of Emergent Themes for Each Interview

Superordinate theme title	Superordinate theme title	Superordinate theme title
Emergent Themes ↓ Subordinate theme Coding Subordinate theme Coding Subordinate theme Coding	Emergent Themes ↓ Subordinate theme Coding Subordinate theme Coding Coding	Emergent Themes ↓ Subordinate theme Coding Subordinate theme Coding

Table 2: Final Table of Themes

Perceptions of SH			The Tools of Prevention		Organisational Foundations for Prevention		
Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3
Coding	Coding	Coding	Coding	Coding	Coding	Coding	Coding
↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓

Shivali Singh

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Science and Technology