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Highly educated minority women:

What can we learn from their successful career development?

Master's thesis in Master in Economics and Business Administration

Supervisor: Synnøve Hitland

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Foreword

With this thesis my master's degree programme in Economics and Business Administration with specialisation in strategy, organisation and leadership at NTNU Business School is coming to an end. In this thesis I have looked at the career development of highly educated minority women and their opportunities on the labour market. The contribution of this thesis lies where it sheds light on what the women themselves believe are their success factors as people who have made a career in a relevant field despite the many challenges they have faced.

Writing this has been one of the biggest challenges in my life. I have learned a lot about myself while writing a thesis alone. Perhaps due to this, what I have learned is even more valuable. I want to take this opportunity to thank the respondents who have given their time to share their insightful stories. I would also like to thank my supervisor Synnøve Hitland for the great guidance and the professional discourse. I am also grateful to Hilde Fjellvær for guidance towards the end of the thesis. I also want to thank my friends for cheering me on and believing in me during times when I did not. I am incredibly grateful for my family and their invaluable support during all the highs and lows that comes with taking on such a research project. Lastly, I want to thank my university friends as well for being on this journey with me and making the heaviest of days more tolerable.

Trondheim, August 2020

Suzan Cifci

The content of this thesis is at the expense of the author.

Abstract

This master's thesis is a research contribution that examines highly educated women with non-Western minority background and their successful career development in a relevant field. The thesis statement is “*Highly educated minority women – what can we learn from their successful career development?*” Three research questions have been prepared to shed light on the statement: “How do highly educated women with minority background experience the labour market and recruitment processes?”, “How do highly educated women with minority background experience their current working situation?”, and “How do the women experience their career opportunities in order to advance in their careers?”

To answer the thesis statement and the research questions, a qualitative case study with an abductive approach has been used. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted, with a sample size consisting of eight non-Western minority women. These women have so-called mid-tier or above positions in various large and hierarchical organizations in Trondheim. The theoretical framework consists of theories that shed light on conditions on the labour market, as well as Joan Acker's theory of inequality regimes that looks at the processes in organisations that create inequalities.

The main findings show that there are several factors that have influenced the career development of the women. They have been purposeful in their career paths, and have invested in higher education and in developing their language skills. Their upbringing and family relationships seem to have had a guiding effect on career development. Social networks appear to be especially important when starting a career. The higher up the women are in the organisation, the more competence and capabilities show to be important. Social relationships in the workplace, on the other hand, are affected. The women experience that they have career opportunities on an equal footing with everyone else, but none of them have ambitions to become leaders even among those who have a doctorate.

Sammendrag

Denne masteroppgaven er et forskningsbidrag som undersøker høyt utdannede kvinner med ikke-vestlig minoritetsbakgrunn og deres suksessfulle karriereutvikling i relevant arbeidsmarked. Problemstillingen er *"Høyt utdannede minoritetskvinner – hva kan vi lære av deres vellykkede karriereutvikling?"* Tre forskningsspørsmål har blitt utarbeidet for å belyse problemstillingen: «Hvordan opplever høyt utdannede kvinner med minoritetsbakgrunn arbeidsmarkedet og rekrutteringsprosesser?», «Hvordan opplever høyt utdannede kvinner med minoritetsbakgrunn sin nåværende arbeidssituasjon?» og «Hvilke forventninger og karrieremuligheter har disse kvinnene for å komme videre i karrieren?»

For å besvare problemstillingen og forskningsspørsmålene er det benyttet en kvalitativ casestudie med en abduktiv tilnærming. Det ble gjennomført semi-strukturerte dybdeintervju, med et utvalg som består av åtte ikke-vestlige minoritetskvinner. Disse kvinnene har såkalte mellomnivå stillinger i ulike store og hierarkiske organisasjoner i Trondheim. Det teoretiske rammeverket består av teorier som belyser forhold på arbeidsmarkedet, samt Joan Acker sin teori om inequality regimes som handler om prosesser ved organisasjoner som skaper ulikheter.

Hovedfunnene viser at det er flere faktorer som har påvirket karriereutviklingen til kvinnene. Kvinnene har vært målbevisst i sin karrierevei, og har investert i høyere utdanning og i å utvikle språkferdigheter. Oppvekst og familiære forhold virker å ha en retningsgivende effekt på karriereutviklingen. Sosiale nettverk fremstår som spesielt viktig ved oppstart av karrieren. Jo høyere opp kvinnene er i organisasjonen, jo mer viser kompetanse og ferdigheter å ha betydning. Sosiale relasjoner på arbeidsplassen blir derimot påvirket. Kvinnene opplever at de har karrieremuligheter på lik linje som alle andre, men ingen av de har ambisjoner om å bli ledere selv blant de som har doktorgrad.

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1. Introduction

Over the years, the Norwegian labour market has changed alongside the changes in society. On a world basis, Norway is ranked high regarding women's participation in the workforce (OECD, 2020). However, participation among minority women seems to be relatively lower than the majority. Minorities, immigrants and their descendants, make up 17% of the Norwegian population, however, only 61% of the women with minority background are participating in the workforce (Nadim & Fjell, 2019). Among all the minority groups, women of non-Western minority background, especially from Asia and Africa in particular, seem to struggle the most on the labour market (Thorshaug & Valenta, 2012). This is happening despite the efforts of the government and their political actions to increase workforce participation among minorities (Arbeids- og inkluderingsdepartementet, 2006; NOU 2017: 2). Research shows that minorities, and women, in particular, face barriers and challenges which hinders their access to the labour market (IMDi, 2007).

There is a lot of research that documents the various barriers minorities face on the Norwegian labour market, and this thesis will take a look at those. In the media and the public debate, the focus is mostly on the daunting barriers that minorities face. We hear about all the barriers that are preventing minorities from actively participating on the labour market, those that struggle to get invited to interviews due to their names (Midtbøen, 2015), those that are overqualified for their jobs (NTB, 2017). We hear that minority women, particularly non-Western minority women, are not working and not able to work (Stavrum, 2018). When one looks at the media coverage, it certainly seems daunting and hopeless. However, is it so? How about people who have been able to face these challenges and still have been able to develop a career. This thesis aims to examine the experiences of highly educated women of non-Western minority background and their opportunities for developing a career in Norway. Investigating women who have made it and have gotten access to a relevant field regarding their education, can provide with increased knowledge on their career opportunities and career advancement. This thesis can hopefully contribute with knowledge about what the women themselves believe are their success factors, how they faced challenges, how they perceive their opportunities as career holders, and how this correlates with prior research. This leads to the research questions of this thesis.

1.1 The thesis statement and research questions

Lots of research has been conducted on the lack of active work participation among minorities who have immigrated to Norway. Particularly, research on minority women has increased over the last decade. Most of this research look at the individual, cultural and structural barriers that they face on the labour market (IMDi, 2007). Some researchers contribute the lack of participation to individual barriers in relation to human capital and social capital (Einarsen, 2013; Røed & Bratsberg, 2005; Sørholt, 2016; Wiborg, 2006), some look at discrimination (Midtbøen, 2015; Rogstad, 2000). Through this thesis, I want to look at how the women themselves experience their situations and what they point out to be the success factors leading to their career development. This will create knowledge from a different viewpoint on the matter. It hopefully will lead to increased diversity in organisations, and inspire other minority women to invest in their careers despite their struggles. Based on this, the thesis statement is:

Highly educated minority women – what can we learn from their successful career development?

As a woman born to Kurdish parents and finishing up higher education, this topic is very interesting, and I believe that the thesis statement has social relevancy (Thagaard, 1998). There is no easy answer to the lack of participation of non-Western minority women, and the difficulty of gaining access to the labour market is complex and comprehensive. Thus, the identified research area which this thesis will contribute to is *women with minority background and their career opportunities*. To examine the experiences of the respondents, three research questions have been prepared:

Research question 1: *How do highly educated women with minority background experience the labour market and recruitment processes?*

Research question 2: *How do highly educated women with minority background experience their current working situation?*

Research question 3: *How do the women experience their career opportunities in order to advance in their careers?*

The research questions are going to shed light on the thesis statement and will be the guiding red thread throughout the research process.

1.2 The structure of the thesis

The research questions become a guide and a leading red thread throughout this thesis. To answer these questions, the thesis starts with presenting theories and prior research in chapter 2, and continue with the next chapter by presenting methodological considerations which were made before and during the entire research process. In chapter 4, the presentation of the empirical findings will be made, and continue in chapter 5 by analysing and discussing the empirical findings in light of the theories and prior research presented. Lastly, in chapter 6, conclusions will be drawn, and the thesis will end with reflections around the findings and provide some considerations for future research.

1.3 The case description

In this section, the context concerning the labour market in Norway, and in particular regarding minority women, will be presented.

1.3.1 The Norwegian labour market – A summary of the immigration history in Norway

Until the 1960s, Norway had more migration than immigration (Liebig, 2009), and the country has experienced various immigration trends (Thorshaug & Valenta, 2012). Much like other European countries, Norway had an influx of labour immigration from the 1960s and to the 1970s. This group of immigrants mostly consisted of people from Turkey, Morocco, India and Pakistan (Thorshaug & Valenta, 2012). However, in 1975 immigration was temporarily halted due to the increasing labour immigration rate (Kommunal- og arbeidsdepartementet, 1973). The halt in labour immigration ended up lasting until the 2000s. However, Norway continued to accept refugees and asylum seekers (from countries such as Chile, Uganda, Vietnam, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Somalia), as well as family reunifications (Thorshaug & Valenta, 2012).

Norway experienced another influx of labour immigration East-Europe after 2004 due to the EU's and EEA's labour market. Compared to the previous wave of labour immigrants, a lot of these had a loose connection with Norway, as they usually were "seasonal" workers. However, relatively many also settled in the country and brought their families as well. These various waves and immigration reasons have caused that the overall immigration situation in Norway to become rather complex and has created opportunities, as well as challenges with

the integration of these populations (Thorshaug & Valenta, 2012). Thus, it would be important to look at the labour market- and integration policies.

1.3.2 Labour market- and integration policies in Norway

Equality and diversity are popular themes brought up during political discussions surrounding the inclusive labour market. It is also expected of the labour market to facilitate equality between the sexes and that immigrants are included in the workforce (Gullikstad, 2010). In the past ten years, the Norwegian government has focused on integrating minorities in the public sector. An action plan for the integration and inclusion of the immigrant population in Norway was released in 2006 (Arbeids- og inkluderingsdepartementet, 2006). Under the topic of labour market integration, the focus is on goals and measures to contribute to an active labour market policy. The biggest focus has been on integrating minorities in the public sector, as this is the sector where the government can influence the recruitment policies. One of the measures is the requirement for all government agencies to summon at least one qualified person with a non-Western background to a job interview. The goal is that through these policies, the minority population will obtain positive role models, especially for the youth, in which it may stimulate higher education (Arbeids- og inkluderingsdepartementet, 2006).

In 2009, KS conducted a research and development project about diversity in management. At the point of time, only 2,3 per cent of the top managers in municipalities were non-Western minorities. Thus, the goal of the project was to help Norwegian municipalities in the recruitment of non-Western minorities in important positions. Most of the existing leaders with such background were in the nursing care sector and the health and social sector (Thiis-Evensen, Skattum, & Sekkesæter, 2009). Some of the motivations for municipalities to recruit non-Western minorities in management positions were – competence and experience, labour shortages, and social responsibility for integration. However, lack of Norwegian linguistic skills, lack of professional qualifications, and difficulty in uncovering the competence of the applicant were given as reasons for not recruiting non-Western minorities (Thiis-Evensen et al., 2009, p. 6).

1.2.3 The current situation for minorities

Minorities have various problems on the labour market compared to the ethnic Norwegians, the majority. According to Fedoryshyn and Aamodt (2019), during the 4. quarter of 2018,

unemployment rate for the majority was at 1,6 per cent, while it was 5,4 per cent for minorities. The situation for minorities in the labour market is characterised by complexity due to the heterogeneity of this group. There are big differences in cultural- and educational background, linguistic competence, and ambitions. When considering the experiences of minorities, these are important factors that need to be kept in mind (Sollund, 2006). The preconditions of this thesis are based on the barriers which minority women face on the labour market reported by IMDi (2007). These will be presented below:

1.2.3.1 Individual barriers

For minority women, individual barriers come in the shape of language skills, lower qualifications, and lacking social network. These will be described below.

Language skills

According to IMDi (2007), language problem is a real barrier which women with minority background face in order to participate in the workforce. Rogstad (2001) points out that in some job advertisements, the level of Norwegian skills demanded is unnecessary considering the type of job it is, and it can be seen as a form of discrimination. The lack of language skills can be seen as the biggest barrier during recruitment processes for employers (Tronstad, 2010). However, Håpnes and Berg (2004) describe what she calls for actual language problems and imagined problems. From their research, the latter problem happens more to minority women than men. The assumptions seem to be that it is more difficult to provide a language course to minority women due to their familial obligations.

Lower qualifications

Among women with minority background, the qualification levels seem to be polarised; there are many with lower education as well as many with higher education compared to the majority (Nadim & Fjell, 2019). According to IMDi (2007), the qualification levels are also dependent on what country the women originated from, such as women from Chile actively take education in Norway, while women from countries such as Vietnam take education to a lesser degree after immigrating to Norway. For the women who have higher education from their country of origin, the transferability of that education in the Norwegian context can be questioned (NOU 2017: 2).

Lacking social network

IMDi (2007) states that in 2004 it was reported that around 60 per cent of employments happens through internal and informal recruitment processes. These processes particularly affect people of minority background. The reason for this is that they lack the relevant social connections that inform them of the employers who are looking for employees. Typically, their social network consists of people from their minority communities (Thorshaug & Valenta, 2012). This can create the issue of ethnic segregation if everyone is only relating to their network (IMDi, 2007).

1.2.3.2 Cultural barriers

According to IMDi (2007), cultural barriers which minority women face are attitudes among the women, as well as from their families and community. Some women of particularly with background from Somalia, Morocco or Pakistan seem to have "value-based" attitudes which explain the lack of participation in the workforce compared to the opposite gender from the same countries. The women themselves, and their families seem to have restrictive attitudes, which can be either forced or self-imposed, regarding the women working. Women should be at home and should take care of the family is the most prevalent attitude.

1.2.3.3 Structural barriers

Structural barriers can be the approval of foreign education and discrimination, which are described below.

Approval of education from abroad

In many instances, education from abroad cannot easily be transferred into a Norwegian context (NOU 2017: 2) and is a complicated and time-consuming process for a lot of minorities (Barne- likestillings- og inkluderingsdepartementet, 2013). This acts as an important barrier in which slows down the early access to the labour market, and according to IMDi (2007), it perhaps does not function well in practice.

Discrimination

The research on discrimination in Norway has different perspectives regarding the scale and the causes. Direct discrimination is when actions deliberately aim for people to be treated worse. In contrast, indirect discrimination is about what seemingly are neutral action org

decision-making lead to certain people being disadvantageous compare to others (Midtbøen & Rogstad, 2012). According to Midtbøen (2015), job applicants with Pakistani names were 25 per cent less invited to interviews compared to applicants with Norwegian names, despite identical qualifications.

1.4 The participants

Eight in-depth interviews have been conducted with women who are currently actively participating in the workforce and are working in the Trondheim region. These women have a Non-Western minority background from these areas: Asia, Africa, Latin America, Oceania besides Australia and New Zealand, and Europe outside the EU / EEA. European countries outside the EU / EEA include Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Belarus, Kosovo, Croatia, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Russia, Serbia and Ukraine. They have immigrated to Norway either as adults or children, and have taken at least parts of their education in Norway.

The main topics during the interviews have been their experiences as job seekers on the labour market, how they are experiencing various conditions at work and their prospects. All but one of the participants are working in public sector, and all but one is in permanent employment. However, the focus has been on their personal experiences and not on the effects of various sectors or organisation types have on these experiences. These women have what can be considered a mid-tier or above position in their respective organisations, and they are making use of their education. The "lowest" educational degree among the women is a bachelor's degree, and the "highest" is a doctorate. Next will their organisations be presented. In this thesis, the experiences and the stories of minority women are of interest. However, it is natural to assume that the type of organisation (i.e. public/private, hierarchical/flat structure) might have an impact on the experiences of the participants, and perhaps minority women more so than others.

1.5 The organisations

All of the minority participants, but one work for public organisations. The common feature of the organisations which the participants work for is that they all are large and hierarchical. The organisational configurations of Mintzberg (1989) will be used to explain the organisations in which the participants belong to. As he states, his configurations are the "pure" versions of the organisations, however organisations in the real world usually consist

of a variation of these types. The organisational configurations will be based on the prime coordinating mechanisms in the organisational structure (Mintzberg, 1989). For the sake of anonymity, the names of the organisations will not be mentioned.

Organisation	Respondents who work there	Mintzberg (1989)'s configurations	Characteristics
O1	R1	Professional	Public administrative organisation Large and Hierarchical
	R2	Diversified	
O2	R3	Professional	Public administrative organisation Large and hierarchical
		Diversified	
O3	R4	Professional	Public administrative organisation Large and hierarchical
	R6		
O4	R5	Professional	Public research institution Large and hierarchical
	R7	Diversified	
O5	R8	Professional	Private multinational organisation Large and hierarchical
		Diversified	

Table 1: Type of organisations the respondents work for

Considering the hierarchical and the scale of the organisations, one can assume that there are various factors within the company that affect the perception and the experiences of the women. Every organisation has their own culture, values and structures and so on which can be affected by its external environment and which sector the organisation exists in, as well as it can affect the people operating within (Kvålshaugen & Wennes, 2012).

2. Theory

In this chapter, theories and prior research that is relevant to the thesis will be presented. There is little research on non-Western minority women and their career development. However, to answer the research questions the theoretical framework will consist of theories on human capital and social capital to explain the demands of the labour market, and Acker's theory on *inequality regimes* to explain processes and practices which may affect how one perceives the workplace and one's own opportunity of mobility. Before looking closer at the theoretical framework, an explanation of the terms and usage, and the glass ceiling will be needed.

2.1 Terms and usage

Terms and their usage will be explained in this section.

2.1.1 Diversity

Diversity comes in many shapes and forms; this includes gender, education, ethnicity, age, socio-economic background, sexual orientations, and disabilities (Yukl, 2013). Ethnicity and gender are only parts of diversity. Stereotypes are applied to categorise people based on differences. This also spills over to stereotypes about leadership. In Western countries, the image of a leader is based on the "white man", and those that do not fit into this ideal are typically seen as outsiders (M. Coleman, 2012).

2.1.2 Minority (vs majority)

Being a minority means to belong to a social group which is outnumbered by the majority of the population. Ethnic minorities are ethnic groups which are considered to be a minority within a community and the broader population of a country. They can also be characterised by their different culture, religion, language and so on (Bufdir, 2020). In this thesis, the majority references to ethnic Norwegians with parents and grandparents who also are Norwegian.

2.1.3 Minority women

The term *minority women* will be used, as the characteristics of ethnicity and gender can affect how one interprets social situations. It is not unnatural to assume that these factors have an interacting effect. Thus it will be difficult to separate the one from the other when

interpreting the experiences of minority women (Reid & Comas-Diaz, 1990). As stated by Reid and Comas-Diaz (1990, p. 406), “*both gender and ethnic variables are crucial to the understanding of ethnic minorities’ behaviors. Their interactive effect constitutes a major component of the psychological, sociocultural, environmental, and biological realities for these communities*”.

2.1.4 Non-Western minorities

According to Høydahl (2008), the term *non-Western* is an outdated terminology, and Statistics Norway (SSB) has chosen to move away from that. Since the change they have started using two categories of countries:

1. EU / EEA countries, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, and the other is
2. Asia, Africa, Latin America, Oceania besides Australia and New Zealand, and Europe outside the EU / EEA. European countries outside the EU / EEA include Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Belarus, Kosovo, Croatia, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Russia, Serbia and Ukraine.

Category two is the group of countries that used to represent non-Western countries, and for the sake of cleanliness, the term *non-Western*, will be used, but it encompasses the countries as mentioned earlier. Only minority women with backgrounds from the second category will be discussed in this thesis. Another thing to note is that in an attempt to anonymise the women, their ethnicity or nationality will be mentioned through the usage of continents. This will further be discussed in the section under methodology called *ethics*.

2.1.5 Immigrants

Statistics Norway (SSB) defines immigrants as people who were born abroad, and have two foreign-born parents, as well as four foreign-born grandparents. Their children are defined as Norwegian-born “*norskfødte*” with two immigrant parents and four foreign-born grandparents, and these children are also called as “*second-generation immigrants*” (Dzamarija, 2019).

2.2 “The Glass Ceiling”

The male-dominance and favouritism of men in the organisation, and especially in top management positions, is called *the glass ceiling*. If discrimination based on sex did not exist in organisations, then the number of women in top management would be approximately 50% (Yukl, 2013). One explanation is that women who are in top management positions face various challenges, such as juggling the work-family balance. The conflicts can be more intense due to the demanding nature of their work. However, also as they usually are married to fellow professionals, this may cause women to step down to positions with fewer responsibilities (Zeng, 2011). At the same time, educational choices seem to be another explanation, as traditionally, leadership degrees have been male-dominated (Ellingsæter, 2014).

Applying the metaphor to both gender and ethnicity, being “ethnically” different from the “white Caucasian men” solidifies the glass ceiling effect and keeps minority women away from positions of power (Pompper, 2011). The glass ceiling assumes that the challenges occur during upwards mobility, however during his research, Zeng (2011) finds that the underrepresentation of women and minorities in managerial positions is usually correlated to downwards mobility due to family obligations or occupational preferences. Guest (2016)'s research on minority women executives indicates that women experience different mobility in the organisation compared to their Caucasian counterparts. There are lower chances of promotion, while higher chances of getting demoted or altogether exiting the field.

It could also mean that the challenges are bigger if one is lower in the hierarchy and they decrease as one climbs higher and higher to the top (Baxter & Olin, 2000; Bihagen & Ohls, 2006). Research has shown that the effects of the glass ceiling are usually located in the middle of the hierarchy, where the biggest challenge may be the upward movement from lower- to middle-management level. This means that the glass ceiling effects are a problem which is prevalent in all levels of the hierarchy, and not just in the top management (Baxter & Olin, 2000).

2.3 The labour market and recruitment in organisations

Gullikstad (2010) describes recruitment and division of labour as integral functions to increase diversity and inclusivity on a labour market where the goal is for everyone, no matter their race, gender, ethnic background, or disabilities, to actively participate. Recruitment is about finding the "most suitable" candidate for the position, and this concept usually is

thought to be neutral. However, there are other processes that involve factors such as gender and race (or ethnicity). Thus one can assume that beneath the concept of the "most suitable" candidate, there can be underlying discrimination (Acker, 1990, 2006; Gullikstad, 2010). Acker (1990, p. 149) states this in her theory about gendered organisations, and it can be interpreted to include ethnicity as well:

“In organizational logic, both jobs and hierarchies are abstract categories that have no occupants, no human bodies, no gender. However, an abstract job can exist, can be transformed into a concrete instance, only if there is a worker”. [...] Too many obligations outside the boundaries of the job would make a worker unsuited for the position”.

Research shows that there are certain minority groups, such as those from the Nordic countries, Western Europe and the EU-countries in Eastern Europe, that do better and succeed more in the Norwegian labour market (Thorshaug & Valenta, 2012). Røed and Bratsberg (2005) explain that the differences can be found by looking at the *demand* and the *supply* regarding minorities as part of the workforce. What is required is both formal and informal competence, regarding human capital, social capital and capabilities which can affect the productivity and the adaptability as a participant in the workforce. These factors will be looked at below.

2.3.1 Human capital

Human capital is a term from economic theory and can be used to describe the quality of the skills and prior experience of those working in an organisation (Yukl, 2013). In this thesis, the term will be used to encompass everything from education and language skills, and to the understanding of social codes. Human capital is one of the most important resources an organisation has. This resource is usually identified by education, work experience and specifically relevant skills for the organisation (Hitt & Duane, 2002). Becker (1994) is one of the biggest contributors in this field. He made mathematical models to analyse how education and prior work experiences affected productivity. He views education and on-the-job training to be one of the biggest investments in human capital and which are directly linked to a person's value on the labour market. However, there seem to be negative associations in regards to non-Western minorities and their productivity levels, and which creates scepticism among recruiters (Wiborg, 2006).

Thorshaug and Valenta (2012) point out in their report that *country-specific human capital* is prioritised in Norway. Country-specific human capital is characterised by the skills one has concerning the national culture, language, both social and cultural norms, and beliefs.

It also reflects the demand for education and work experience from a specific country (Schøne, 2005). According to Røed and Bratsberg (2005) compared to the majority, immigrants start with a country-specific human capital deficit. The competence one has built up through education, and work experience loses its value, and communication issues have a big part to play. Communication is not only about formally learning the language, but to also understand norms, social and cultural codes, and the non-verbal implications of social contact.

2.3.1.1 Education as a human capital factor

The choice of education and the level of education a person has will affect their opportunities in the labour market. In Norway, around 48.000 bachelor's- and master's degrees were completed in 2017. 10,5 per cent of those were completed by minorities, and over half of those degrees belonged to women. Traditionally female-dominated degrees, in social sciences and humanities studies, was at the top (Bartsch, Gjermshusengen, & Bekkengen, 2020, p. 10). A larger proportion of minorities have higher education compared to the majority, such as almost 15 per cent of minorities have higher education of more than four years (a master's degree, a doctorate and so on), compared to the majority which is at almost 8 per cent (NOU 2017: 2, p. 61). Among the female minorities, the level of education seems to be polarised. A large number have higher education, as well as a large number have lower education, compared to the majority. Minority women are a heterogeneous group, and thus divides will happen. Among women from countries such as Somalia, Pakistan, Iraq, and Afghanistan seem to mostly have lower education compared to the majority. While those from West-Europe and North-America have higher education than the majority (Nadim & Fjell, 2019; Steinkellner, 2015). According to Steinkellner (2015), the length of education has an impact on workforce participation, the higher education level you have, the more active one is on the labour market. However, it in particular, seems to still be a large barrier for minority women to gain access to the labour market despite their higher education (Håpnes & Berg, 2004).

Education is viewed as the most important tool to increase competence and employment among minorities in Norway. On the other hand, competence and education from outside of Norway often are not transferable in the Norwegian context, and there is a need to "translate" and supplement the foreign education (NOU 2017: 2). According to Røed and Bratsberg (2005), the government and employer-organisations have little information about the quality and the contents of education from abroad. This makes formal evaluation of foreign education a difficult process, as well as employers finding it risky to employ such job

seekers. Not only is it difficult, but often also a time-consuming process, as they in the meantime also need to learn the language and adapt to the new society and its culture (Barne-
likestillings- og inkluderingsdepartementet, 2013). Naturally the demand for documented
formal competency and education seems to act as a barrier for minorities, as they are forced to
go back to school before they can even participate in the workforce (Søholt, 2016).

2.3.1.2 Language as a human capital factor

Norwegian language skills are one of the integration arenas, which is important for minorities
to participate in society and particularly to get access to the labour market (Einarsen, 2013).
Language skills are an important competency during the recruitment of non-Western
minorities in Norwegian organisations (Tronstad, 2010), but also the biggest hurdle non-
Western minorities have to face (IMDi, 2007; Røed & Bratsberg, 2005). The study by
Tronstad (2010) investigate the issue from the employer's perspective, and it identifies the
lack of language skills among non-Western minorities to be the biggest hurdle during
recruitment. There also seems to be a prejudice among Norwegian employers that it is more
difficult to provide language courses to minority women due to their family obligations which
stand in their way to attend after work hours (Håpnes & Berg, 2004; IMDi, 2007).

Language is usually viewed as a practical tool to get through the daily demands that
are required by the job. Thus the required level of language skills will be dependent on the
demands of the job description (Seeberg & Dahle, 2006). Low communication abilities will
reduce the productivity in jobs where collaborative problem-solving is necessary. This makes
the “competence-deficit” even more apparent as language is a very country-specific factor
(Røed & Bratsberg, 2005). However, according to Seeberg and Dahle (2006), language also
functions as a symbol of the interaction between people, as it also functions as a signal of
belonging and identity.

2.3.1.3 Social- and cultural understanding as human capital factors

Language is about communication, and it is inter-relational (Håpnes & Berg, 2004), thus
social and cultural understanding through language has a big role not only during recruitment
but also at the workplace (Rogstad, 2001; Søholt, 2016). Being able to master the language is
also about understanding written and unwritten social and cultural codes (Røed & Bratsberg,
2005). In most Norwegian companies, the employees must be a part of the organizational
culture, as they are viewed as contributors in shaping the tasks to be able to effectively

implement the work. Thus, it is seen as important that minorities have a good social and cultural understanding in the workplace (Søholt, 2016).

According to Rogstad (2001), the lack of understanding of cultural and social codes can inhibit the relations between minorities and the majority at work. Not only that, an employer's perception of the job seekers understanding of these codes already affected during the recruitment phase. Research shows that job applicants with foreign names have a lesser chance of getting hired compared to equality qualified people with Norwegian names (Midtbøen, 2015). In his study Rogstad (2001) finds that “visible” minorities were rejected during the recruitment process, and not due to their qualifications, but due to assumptions based on their names and outer appearance. The employers had a certain prejudice due to the “visibility” of their minority background, such as insecurity around the skills and competence the applicant held, or if they could “fit in” at a Norwegian workplace due to their native culture. Thus, linguistic, social and cultural understanding plays a big role. Due to this, other alternatives such as social networks become of much higher importance for such minorities.

One can also look at this from the perspective of *Bourdieu's principle of habitus*. An individual's habitus is the way one perceives and interprets the world around them. It consists of values and norms, and socially ingrained cultural habits and attitudes which are usually shared with people within the same community. These communities consist of people with similar backgrounds (i.e. nationality, ethnicity, religion, education, and profession). The habitus follows from generation to generation through imitation and individuals socialise within this reality. It represents how individuals act and how culture and life history can shape one's understanding of the reality around them (Lizardo, 2004).

2.3.2 Social capital

Social capital concerns with the quality and value of relations between individuals and organisations that create value, and it usually brings opportunities for those that hold the capital (Hitt & Duane, 2002). J. S. Coleman (1988) defines social capital as the resources one can procure through mutual expectations, obligations, information channels and social norms. One can also see it as a web of relationships which allows access to knowledge and resources that are difficult to obtain by oneself. The use of a social network to get access to certain positions on the labour market is a well-used tool and can create an alternative way in (Rogstad, 2000). However, for non-Western minorities, access to the labour market seems to be a big challenge compared to the majority and other minorities (Wiborg, 2006). People with

minority background usually lack a relevant social network, and which can act as a barrier on the labour market (Brekke, Fladmoe, Lidén, & Orupabo, 2020; Thorshaug & Valenta, 2012). Once they immigrate to Norway, they lose all the references and the social network in which they have built up back in their native country (Røed & Bratsberg, 2005). Once they have moved to Norway, their network is usually limited to the people within their minority group, and one can assume who is also struggling themselves to get access to the labour market (Thorshaug & Valenta, 2012). This can be correlated to what Granovetter (1973) calls strong ties and weak ties.

J. S. Coleman (1988) claims that it is the strength of the ties that determines the strength of your social capital and your ability to achieve certain goals. On the other hand, Granovetter (1973) claims the opposite and states that it is the weaker ties which are the most helpful on the labour market. The reason for this is that the people that one has strong ties with usually socialise with the same crowds and institutions, and thus obtaining the same information. This means that there is relatively little new information to gather from those that one has strong ties with as you already know what they know. On the other hand, weak ties become a strong resource as there is a lot more information to gather in a rather easy manner.

One can also look at this from the perspective of Putnam (2000), as he introduced the terms *bonding capital* and *bridging capital*. Bonding capital relates to the relationships within a community characterised by similar social and demographic factors, such as ethnicity, religion, social class. These strong and close ties usually develop within a family and with close friends. This type of social capital can provide with emotional and material support during socio-economic difficulties and can make everyday life easier. On the other hand, bridging capital relates to relationships between communities and consists of what Granovetter (1973) calls weak ties. These relations consist of people of different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, and who can act as information channels. According to Putnam (2000), this type of social capital is the most important to be able to move forward and to be able to change one's socio-economic status.

2.4 Career development and career opportunities

In her book *Men and women of the corporation*, Rosabeth M. Kanter wrote that “*aspirations, work commitment, and a sense of organizational responsibility could also be aroused by a dramatic increase in opportunity*” (Kanter, 1993, p. 135). Compared to job satisfaction, which

is about comfort while doing the job, a sense of opportunity is more dynamic and affects work involvement. One can be satisfied with the job but also be frustrated about the lack of mobility in the hierarchy (Kanter, 1993). Research conducted on the lack of mobility among women may indicate that there is a higher threshold for certain groups, such as women and minorities (Kanter, 1993; Pekkarinen & Vartiainen, 2006). Pekkarinen and Vartiainen (2006) found that women usually started at the lower end of the complexity scale, while most of the men worked on more complex jobs. The women also found it difficult to move on to more complex jobs and were less likely to get promoted. One also has to consider that women to a lesser degree apply for executive positions compared to men. Women have more responsibilities for family and children, which can make it more difficult to invest in one's career (Halrynjo, Kitterød, & Teigen, 2015). As people confront the reality of their work situation, their aspirations can become lower as they think that their opportunities of mobility are stunted, and may cause less commitment to their work and the organisation (Kanter, 1993).

The inequalities which women and minorities may experience in the workplace will have varying degrees and different mechanisms. According to a study by Elliott and Smith (2004) based in the USA, Latin-Americans typically have lower education, and that can increase the gap in workplace power between them and "white" men. At the same time, white women experience worse inequality when they gain more work experience. Networking was especially important for black women, and they rely on it to attain positions of power. Halrynjo et al. (2015) state that important factors for career development and prospects are professional focus, inner drive, and a commitment to leadership. However, conditions both in the organisation and in the home life must be present so that the motivation can be realised and maintained. Most supervisors, regardless of their race and sex, tend to fill power positions they oversee with people similar to themselves (Elliott & Smith, 2004), which Kanter (1993, p. 48) calls *homosocial reproduction*. Homosocial reproduction maintains the imbalance in power and diversity in leadership positions. Kobberstad (2020)'s study on highly educated refugees shows that the ambition levels get reduced as one is faced with the reality that the ambitions are not realisable. The ambitions get downgraded when they realise that the education from their native country is not enough to reach their goals. They come across a dilemma, "*Should they maintain their ambitions for, for example, long-term education plans with uncertain future opportunities, or should they focus on short-term qualification for any job, at the expense of their dreams?*" (Kobberstad, 2020, p. 106).

2.5 Gendered organizations and inequality regimes

In this section, the theoretical framework is based on Joan Acker's theories on gendered organisations will be presented. Acker (1990, 2006) put the organisations in the centre of her conceptualisation. However this thesis will attempt to use the same conceptualisation to put the personal and individual experiences of the respondents in the centre, with the help of previous research, and investigate the experiences the respondents have regarding their working situation, and their ambitions and prospects.

In her foundational work *Hierarchies, jobs and bodies: A theory of gendered organisations*, Acker (1990) theorised and put the unequal nature of organisations in the foreground. Gender becomes a construct within organisations, and it partakes in the processes in which decides who gets what job and for what pay, and it also affects the power structures and who wields power. In her reconceptualization, Acker (2006) sees the need for intersectional analyses to be able to develop insight into how gender, race and class create various social realities. She defined inequality in organisations as "*loosely interrelated practices, processes, actions, and meanings that result in and maintain class, gender, and racial inequalities within particular organizations*" (Acker, 2006, p. 443). According to Acker (2006), these inequalities come in the form of systematic disparities between those that are in power, those that have control over resources, opportunities, decision-making, incentives, and those that have control over work relations. The framework links the inequalities in the organisation with the inequalities in the external environment such as its society, culture, politics, and history. Inequality regimes have six characteristics:

"the bases of inequality, the shape and degree of inequality, the organizing processes that create and recreate inequalities, the invisibility of inequalities, the legitimacy of inequalities, and the controls that prevent protests against inequalities" (Acker, 2006, pp. 444-455)

Although her theory looks at gender, race/ethnicity and class, this thesis will mainly focus on gender and ethnicity. In this section, only four out of the six characteristics, which are relevant to the empirical findings and the discussion, will be presented.

2.5.1 The shape and degree of inequality

The steepness of the organisational hierarchy can affect the degree of inequality. Traditional hierarchical organisations are usually gendered and racialised (Acker, 2006). As Acker (2006, p. 445) puts it "the image of the successful organization and the image of the successful

leader share many of the same characteristics, such as strength, aggressiveness, and competitiveness". These characteristics are usually correlated with the male leader and the male worker, and this can create masculine stereotypes regarding behaviour at the workplace in which women are expected to follow these stereotypes. The degree of inequality is also related to power in organisations, or rather to the people who have the power. Race and gender are fundamentally important in shaping the power differences as one rises in the hierarchy (Acker, 2006).

2.5.2 The organising processes that produce inequality

According to Acker (2006), all organisations have practices and processes which affect racial and gender inequalities. These practices are usually developed by consultants or managers and are influenced by the external environment and reflected by society. HR-related decision-making stems from inequalities in organisational processes and practices, which will also affect leadership, strategy, and organisational structure, -culture and -climate. The solution can be to create "constraints" on decision-makers by integrating equality in the organisational practices, structures, and processes (Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015; Thiis-Evensen et al., 2009). To know how inequality is produced and reproduced then one has to look into the practices and processes that affect the organisation:

2.5.2.1 *The general requirements of work*

Acker (2006) explains this through the imagery of the "white" man, and how workplaces are organised based on this image where one as a worker is only dedicated to the work and with no obligations in the shape of family or children. As women usually have more obligations outside of the workplace, the gender inequalities in organisations are maintained by this imagery. This continues to affect the "unequal distribution of women and men in organizational class hierarchies" (p. 448).

2.5.2.2 *Class hierarchies*

Class hierarchies have embedded racial and gender patterns. Dimensions such as gender and race are reproduced through organising practices by restricting opportunities and expecting certain behaviour. They are also reproduced through interactions and decision-making (Acker, 2006). In their study Halrynjo et al. (2015) finds that for top managers getting responsibilities and challenges early in their careers was important for them to reach top management.

Especially for the top female managers, it was important they were seen by their supervisors and leaders early on. This indicated that supportive management and working environment has an impact on career advancement and mobility in organisations. Developing subordinate skills is part of supportive leadership, and key aspects are providing developmental opportunities. This provides the subordinate with more skill development, confidence in their capabilities, and lead to faster career advancement (Yukl, 2013)

2.5.2.3 Recruitment and hiring

Recruitment and hiring are about finding the most suitable person for a job. Acker (2006) explains although the requirements of work are based on the imagery of the “white” man, it is expected that both women and men have to perform according to these requirements. Also, when hiring, social networks can play a role in maintaining the inequalities in organisations, as well as the criteria of competence. The judgement on competence can be affected by the race and gender of those involved in the recruitment process (Acker, 2006). Thus it will be important to create awareness and integrate gender and ethnic equality in the recruitment strategies used (Gullikstad, 2010).

2.5.2.4 Informal interactions while “doing the work”

The interactions between the people in organisations consist of assumptions based on gender and race, and it affects how people behave and their attitudes. What is considered appropriate behaviour can vary from organisation to organisation based on the actual situation, the organisational culture, and how the people perceive things (Acker, 2006). The structure of the organisation can impact the "work behaviour", and women who have their opportunities stunted and can develop attitudes which can become much like self-fulfilling prophecies (Kanter, 1993).

2.5.3 The visibility of inequalities

The degree of awareness of inequality vary from organisation to organisation, and it can be intentional or unintentional. The visibility can be affected by the position of the person as it can be difficult for the privileged to be aware of their privilege (Acker, 2006). Acker (2006) mentions how those that are in dominant groups tend to be unaware of the inequalities around them, and how it can “disappear” as people view inequality, such as gender inequality as unrelated to the organisation. Nunez-Smith et al. (2009) find this in their research that the

severity of the experiences of discrimination or inequality depended on how the respondents identified themselves in regards to their race and ethnicity. A "minority hierarchy" was identified by Brekke et al. (2020), where discrimination was recognised differently according to which minority groups one belongs to – the biggest group experiencing discrimination was minorities from Asia or Africa. Acker (2006) also mentions how inequalities can be hidden by those that discuss through the lenses of management and leadership. However, those that have a lower-tier job in the hierarchy will most likely be more aware of the inequalities, perhaps due to race.

2.5.4 Control and compliance

Organisational controls are shaped by hierarchical power, as well as gendered and racialised relations, and due to this, it can be very complex. It is about maintaining the power of managers while at the same time making the workers accept the inequality system, which is already in place. Control mechanisms can be in the form of direct control such as bureaucratic rules and punishments when breaking those rules, and wages can also be a powerful control tool. Monitoring, restricting the flow of information and selective recruitment are forms of indirect controls. Lastly, there are internalised control mechanisms which come in the form of formal structures and rules, relations between co-workers and superiors and subordinates, as well as the mindset of it is moot to challenge the established processes. The internalised controls are usually invisible and difficult to detect (Acker, 2006).

Below is a table that explains how the theoretical framework will be used in relation to the research questions.

Research question	Theory	Theoretical characteristics
Research question 1: How do highly educated women with minority background experience the labour market and recruitment processes?	Human capital	Education Language Social- and cultural understanding
	Social capital	Social network
Research question 2: How do highly educated women with minority background experience their current working situation?	Inequality regimes	The shape and degree of inequality The organising processes that produce inequality The visibility of inequalities
Research question 3: How do the women experience their career opportunities in order to advance in their careers?	Glass ceiling	Control and compliance

Table 2: Theoretical framework in relation to research questions

3. Method

The purpose of this research process is to provide new knowledge into the already existing research field about *women with minority background and their career opportunities*. It is worth mentioning that the aim is not to obtain generalisation. The goal of this thesis is to understand the variations and nuances in the experiences the respondents have, and it will be difficult to generalise based on the findings of this thesis. This chapter will be going through the methodological choices which were made for this thesis. These choices will be affected by the research questions and the gathered theory and already existing research on this field. The chapter will start with researcher's stance on scientific philosophy, and it continues to explain the various choices that have been made throughout the research process. All of the choices and considerations, such as the chosen research methods and data collection process, will be explained. Lastly, the quality of the thesis will be considered and evaluated

3.1 Philosophy of science

Philosophy of science is a systematic approach to the assumptions behind scientific study and knowledge (Gilje & Grimen, 1995). These philosophical assumptions affect how the research is conducted through research design and the collection of data (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2019). To understand the importance of the philosophy of science, one needs to understand *ontology* and *epistemology*.

Ontology is the study of the assumptions we have about the world and what gives shape to our reality (Bell et al., 2019; Nyeng, 2017). Ontology questions “whether the social phenomena that we study should be understood as existing objectively, external to observers [...], or whether they are ‘made real’ by the activities of humans and the meanings which observers attach to them” (Bell et al., 2019, p. 26). Epistemology derives from ontology and can be understood as the study of knowledge. This means that it is about understanding how we gain and use knowledge to understand our reality (Bell et al., 2019; Nyeng, 2017). Bell et al. (2019) state that when we choose to research a business-related phenomenon, epistemology provides with guidelines for how the research should be conducted. It is there to make sure the research design and the methods that are used to gather data allows the creation of knowledge which reflects the business world (Bell et al., 2019). In this regard, one could say that there are two opposing positions – positivism and hermeneutics. In this thesis, the field of research will be within leadership and organisation psychology, and this is where the epistemological position hermeneutics will be relevant.

3.1.1 Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is an interpretive approach to social sciences and is based on a “social constructionist ontology” (Bell et al., 2019, p. 31). This means that it has an interpretive approach to society and to human beings as a whole. Interpretation as a tool is usually needed to turn phenomena that appears to be misunderstood or simply is difficult to understand into something clearer and more understandable (Schmidt, 2014). Hermeneutics is about interpreting and understanding social phenomena by analysing what meaning it brings to those involved (Bell et al., 2019; Nyeng, 2017). Thus, this interpretive approach can be viewed as appropriate for this thesis and its thematic. As social actors, we are constantly interpreting the environment around us and give meaning to the actions of other social actors, and the interpretations will vary from person to person (Nyeng, 2017). This will be important to remember throughout the research process.

As Johannessen, Tufte, and Christoffersen (2016, p. 31) puts it “*the reality is complex. It consists of an infinity of objects, people, interactions, experiences and interpretations.*” Due to this, there can be challenges related to the finding of solid results, and that is why the thesis starts off with what the researcher wants to achieve and the goals of this research journey. There are plenty of factors that come to play in the interpretation of one's reality. What is portrayed in the media, as well as the researcher's own experiences as a minority woman in Norway can, and probably does, colour the self-interpreted reality of the respondents. As social researchers, one has to come to terms with the fact that the job requires to interpret an already interpreted reality (Bell et al., 2019; Johannessen et al., 2016). This is called *double hermeneutics* (Nyeng, 2017). However there is a third level going on in this thesis as the interpretations done by the researcher will also be interpreted in terms of prior research on minority women in the workforce (Bell et al., 2019). In light of hermeneutics as an interpretive approach to the experiences of the women, it is deemed appropriate to use social constructivism to be able to understand the social phenomena which are going to be examined in this thesis.

3.1.2 Social constructivism

According to the social constructivism approach, the world is constructed by social actors through their actions and understanding. The social world is not only created through the interaction between people, but it is also constantly changing (Bell et al., 2019). Tjora (2018)

explains this as a circular process where the social world is thought to be objective. However, it is the social interaction in our society which creates and changes the social world as we know it. In media and generally in research on the matter, when minorities are mentioned a lot of negative associations are brought up. Not concerning the minorities themselves, but regarding issues such as discrimination and stereotypes. By using the term *minority women*, despite the goal of researching women with minority backgrounds and their careers, it might add to the existing discourse. According to Elder-Vass (2012), it is through language in which our understanding of the world is shaped by, and this social factor is a central part of social constructivism.

Tjora (2018) mentions how an understanding of reality created through language can be shared among the people in a community. It can be assumed that the women who participated in this research do not only feel belonging to the Norwegian society, but also to their community of people (consisting of the same ethnicity, socio-economic status, native language and so on). During the interviews, most of the women mentioned how they did not feel that they experienced any difficulties or discrimination either in the labour market or at their workplace. They thought of themselves as deviations rather than the norm due to the shared experiences and discussions among their communities. One can say that these communities have their own cultures. Elder-Vass (2012, p. 160) defines culture as shared practices related “*to ways of interacting socially, to the language that we use, to ways of dressing, cooking, and eating, and to aesthetic practices like art and music*”. It can be assumed that there are various cultures within a national culture (i.e. the Norwegian culture), and it does not seem farfetched to assume that the discourse happening in one culture might be different from the other.

The thesis is the result of the combination of the respondents' world construction, the researcher's interpretations and theoretical assumptions. The research questions have been presented further up, and it has been the guiding red thread throughout this project. In the next section, the research process and the various choices which were made will be presented and argued for.

3.2 Research method

Quantitative methods are usually used when collecting numerical data for the analysis (Jacobsen, 2015). According to Bell et al. (2019), this method has been dominating business

research for decades, even though qualitative methods has grown in popularity since the 1980s. Quantitative methods are used by researchers to be able to measure social phenomena and to find correlating relationships between the variables. On the other hand, qualitative methods are used when the researchers want to focus on words instead of numbers during the data collection process (Bell et al., 2019). Qualitative research is about exploring and interpreting phenomena in their given context (Lichtman, 2017). Due to having a social constructivist approach, qualitative research is assumed to be appropriate for this thesis. As the research questions of this thesis can be categorised as explorative (Jacobsen, 2015), and considering the chosen philosophy of science, qualitative methods seem to be the correct choice for this thesis. This choice will affect the design of the research.

3.2.1 Deductive or inductive approach

During the forming of the thesis, an important issue regarding the relationship between the theory and data collection process was faced. During the start, an idea of what was interesting to investigate was known and which was women with minority background and the issues they face in the labour market and careers. The goal is to find a strategy that can capture and represent the respondents' experiences and reality in the best possible manner. With a deductive relationship between theory and data, one starts with shaping ideas of the world through already existing research and theories and collect data to see if they correlate with these expectations of the world. On the other hand, there is the inductive approach, where the researcher collects data first and later finds theories to substantiate the findings. This to be able to have an open mind regarding the findings without the theory limiting the information that is gathered (Jacobsen, 2015). Bell et al. (2019, p. 23) explained the relationship between these two approaches as such, “[...] *just as deduction often entails an element of induction, the induction process is likely to involve some deduction*”. According to Jacobsen (2015), both approaches are two extremes as it is unrealistic to only relate to theory considering that theory comes forth due to observation of the world. At the same time, one cannot expect that one, as a researcher, can go out into the world without any prejudice or without any pre-existing ideas of the world. This is called for the abductive approach.

This interchanging approach can be found in this thesis. In the beginning, the research topic was known, but it was necessary to know what kind of research has been conducted within this domain. The beginning of the research process was dedicated to prior research to obtain an overview. This is very much in line with the deductive approach (Bell et al., 2019).

It was interesting to view the social phenomena from the eyes of working women with minority background from certain areas of the world. Prior research on the topic is usually concentrated around the barriers in the labour market, and there are relatively few which concerns themselves of minority women who actually were able to successfully build a career. The deductive approach helped with creating an overview of potential theories that can be used, however it was a conscious choice to limit it so that the prior research would not be leading for the data collection process. To keep an open mind during this process and to allow the data collection to inspire and impact the theories that will be chosen in the end. After the data collection process, it was apparent that other theories and prior research were deemed more relevant. This can be seen as being on the spectrum of induction (Bell et al., 2019).

3.3 The research design

A research design provides the researcher with a framework for the data collection process and the analysis of the findings, and Bell et al. (2019) outlines five potential research designs. To be able to achieve the aim of this thesis, which is to provide an in-depth look into the complexity of the women's situation in the context of the research questions, a case study was deemed to be appropriate. Case studies consist of intensive analysis of a case within its setting (Bell et al., 2019) in order to examine the complexity of the phenomenon (Elliot, Fairweather, Olsen, & Pampaka, 2016). This entails a detailed and in-depth examination of a few cases, which is well suited for this thesis as it examines social processes (Elliot et al., 2016). Although case studies have been criticised for the findings not being generalisable, however by studying a case one will be able to obtain a more comprehensive view of the phenomenon through nuances and variation in the information provided by the respondents. And it is the variation in the experiences of the respondents which are of interest in this thesis. In the lines of what Bell et al. (2019, p. 67) describe as a *multiple-case study*, eight women were interviewed. These women have ethnic backgrounds from these areas – Asia with Turkey, Africa, Latin-America, Oceania except Australia and New Zealand, and European countries outside of the EU and EEA (Høydahl, 2008). For the sake of anonymity, the ethnicity of the women will not be revealed. As this thesis is attempting to look at the phenomenon at large and this sample size will provide a deeper understanding of it.

As mentioned in the previous section, this thesis will be using qualitative methods with an interchangeable approach to induction and deduction, as well as the choice of using a case study as a research design. These choices will affect the data collection process.

3.4 Data collection

In this chapter, the data collection process will be presented. According to Johannessen et al. (2016) when reality is observed through various methods, then the reality has become data. Thus, the data is something the observer creates, and it becomes the link between the observed reality and the analysis of the actual reality. Due to this, the presentation of the data collection process will be based on what was deemed as the best method to capture the respondent's reality.

Shedding light on the process is the main purpose of this section. As mentioned previously, there is little research about minority women who have successfully developed a career. The purpose is to go in-depth on how the women themselves experience the labour market and their job opportunities. Thus, it was deemed necessary to gather new empirical data to be able to obtain these perspectives. These data are considered to be primary data as the person collecting the data and processing them are the same person (Bell et al., 2019).

The data collection consists of eight semi-structured interviews. The minority women were asked about their experiences regarding their experiences on the labour market as job seekers, they were questioned about their current workplace, and about their perceived career opportunities. The chosen data collection method will be further discussed in the next section.

3.4.1 Sample size and recruitment of respondents

In this qualitative study it is required to use a purposive sampling approach with the goals of the research questions in mind (Bell et al., 2019; Thagaard, 1998). To investigate the research questions, it was deemed necessary to interview non-Western minority women who have successfully developed a career on the labour market. Most of the respondents are from Asia, while the next biggest group is from Eastern Europe, this can be seen in figure 1. It was important that the position these women had in the company was of a mid-tier status such as consultants, teachers, doctors, researchers and so on. It was also a conscious choice to choose respondents who are not working in traditionally female-dominated sectors or jobs – such as secretaries, kindergarten teachers, nurses and so on. The reason for this was to eliminate gender-segregated occupations. The combination of the three requirements of higher education, minority background and so-called “higher status” position in the company limited the access to potential respondents in Trondheim. It is worth mentioning that some of the

women immigrated to Norway as children or as adults. Those that arrived as adults have taken parts of their education at a Norwegian educational institution.

Johannessen et al. (2016, p. 114) recommend that smaller projects should have a sample size of 10-15 respondents. As this master's thesis would be considered a smaller research project due to its timeframe, the aim has always been to be able to apply this recommendation to this project. However, due to unforeseen happenings related to COVID-19, it has been difficult to get in contact with potential respondents. Thus, the sample size of the women consists of eight respondents, however after interview number seven the data collection reached its saturation point (Tjora, 2017), and thus the sample is fully capable of answering the research questions. As Thagaard (1998) states, it is about finding respondents who are able to give relevant information, and this is believed to be the case for the respondents participating in this thesis.

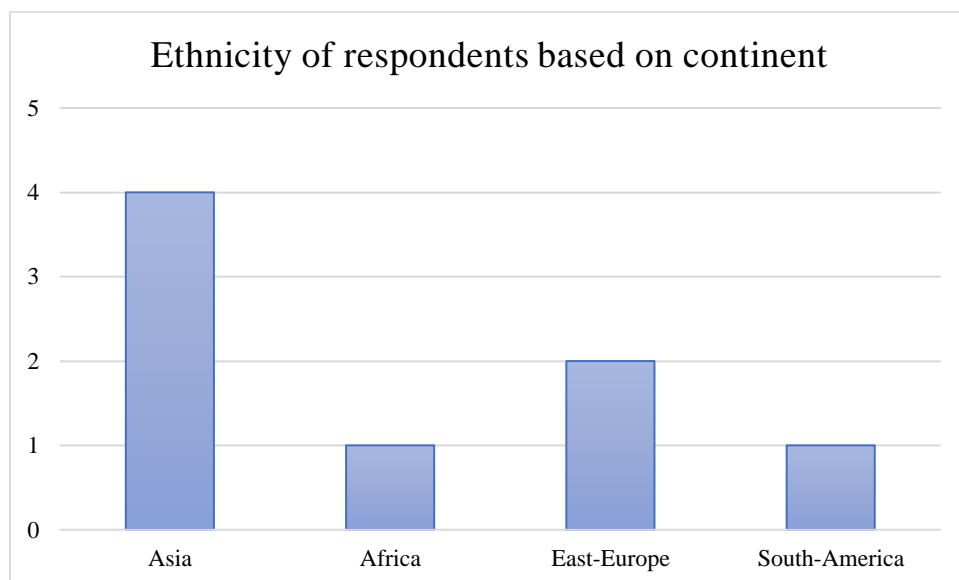


Figure 1: Ethnicity of respondents based on continents

3.4.2 The interviews

The size of the sample varies from research project to research project (Johannessen et al., 2016), but as one proceeds with the interviews the data collection will reach a saturation point in which the answers tend to be similar to one another (Tjora, 2017). A lot of useful data came from these interviews, and semi-structured in-depth interviews are a well-used tool in the qualitative research community (Bell et al., 2019; Tjora, 2017). This is the data collection method which was used during this thesis as well.

According to Tjora (2017) with in-depth interviews the goal is to be able to create a space of free conversation regarding specific topics. In-depth interviews are appropriate when one wants to explore the nuances in the various experiences, and this was important for this thesis. These types of interviews are a form of individualisation of the respondents (Jacobsen, 2015), and the goal is to study their experiences and opinions, as well as to understand how they view the world – their own reality (Tjora, 2017). The forming of the interview guide was meticulous, because finding the underlying factors behind their motivation and progress in the labour market was important.

Before starting the data collection process, one is met with the challenge to choose the level of structure in the interviews. Three forms of interviewing were applicable, the first option was the unstructured interview, where the interview is supposed to simulate a conversation between two people. The researcher usually has a set of topics to go through, but relevant topics brought up by the interviewee can also be followed up with questions (Tjora, 2017). On the opposite end, there is a structured interview, which is typically used in quantitative research, and the questions and the order of them are pre-set in a rigid manner. Lastly, there is the *semi-structured interview* which was the most appropriate choice for the topic of this thesis. This type of interview is a combination of the prior mentioned types, and which combines structure with the flexibility (Bell et al., 2019). The interview guide had pre-set questions to be answered. However, it also had the flexibility to change the order when the need showed itself. During the interview situation themselves, this semi-structure allowed the researcher to take on an active listener role and to follow-up on relevant topics and digressions brought by the interviewee (Thagaard, 1998).

The work on the interview guide (see appendix 8.1) was conducted after gathering information from prior research and developing the research questions. After the first few interviews with the women, it was apparent that some questions were redundant and the flow of the questions was not appropriate, so a few corrections were made, such as removing and adding questions and changing their order. An interview guide is an overview of the topics one wishes to get information about during an interview. Asking the respondents questions regarding the topics allows them to reflect on the topic and questions (Jacobsen, 2015). Tjora (2017, p. 155) presents a layout for in-depth interviews which was used for this interview guide. He suggests that the guide should start with warm-up questions, which was applied by asking simple and general questions for the purpose of mapping certain details about the respondents, as well as to gain trust. It was important that the respondents get as much information as they could, through e-mail exchanges, about the project and their rights

regarding their participation prior to the interview itself. As much as trust was important, the researcher wanted the interviewees to be free of interferences and thus it was decided that the interview guide would not be sent beforehand to the respondents. It was believed to be important that they did not reflect on the questions beforehand and that they would not be able to "discuss" the topics in the interview guide with others. It was deemed important to get the respondents' own reflections at the moment the question was asked. One can question the validity of this method as it is a sensitive and difficult topic for the respondents to talk about. However, it was believed that if they had the opportunity to reflect on it prior to the interview then perhaps the information given to the researcher might have been flawed in the sense that they could have downplayed or exacerbated their experiences.

During the actual interview, and after the warm-up questions, questions which demanded more reflection were asked, and which these are the core of the interview (Tjora, 2017). The core of the interview guide consisted of three main topics; how the respondents have experienced (i) the labour market as job seekers, (ii) their working situation and workplace, and lastly (iii) their ambitions and career opportunities. Most of the questions were open-ended, and most questions were gender-neutral, except for the questions where the interest lied in how gender and minority background affected certain situations in their life. The gender-neutrality was added to avoid for the questions to be leading in any way, and it was important that the respondents interpreted the questions as they heard it. Lastly, Tjora (2017) recommends to end the interview with closing questions, and here the respondents were thanked for their participation and where asked if they had anything else they wanted to add which was not covered or they could comment on the interview situation.

The preferred method was face-to-face interviews, as it allowed for the opportunity to observe the respondents better, such as their mannerisms, behaviours and so on. Such interviews create the question of where the interviews should be held. It was important that the respondents felt comfortable as such they were allowed to choose the interview location which can create a feeling of safety (Jacobsen, 2015). Most of the interviews were done at their workplace while one happened at Trondheim Business School as the respondent was in the area. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak and the shutdown of society, face-to-face interviews became more difficult to conduct. Two of the interviews happened over online communication programs (i.e. Skype, Teams). Most of the respondents were engaged in the topic and were happy to contribute to the research project. They all accepted to the audio recording, and its presence allowed the researcher to participate as an active listener during the interview and to ask follow-up questions (Thagaard, 1998). However, there can be a

downside to using a recorder, as the respondents might restrict and limit themselves during the interview (Tjora, 2017). This was proven to be true, as one of the respondents was worried about their workplace hearing her statements and wanted to talk candidly off recorder. This was not noted down as it was implicitly understood that she didn't want it on the recorder nor on paper. Another was very aware of its presence and would look at the recorder at times while answering questions. Below will be a table of the respondents and a few interview attributes.

Respondent #	Position	Date	Time
R1	Adviser	27.02.2020	1:35:37
R2	Senior adviser	28.02.2020	45:57
R3	Teacher	02.03.2020	43:40
R4	Consultant	09.03.2020	28:32
R5	Research scientist	09.03.2020	38:36
R6	Adviser	10.03.2020	32:26
R7	Research scientist	16.03.2020	33:57
R8	Manager	26.03.2020	1:00:30

Table 3: Interview attributes

3.5 Data processing and analysis of data

As the data collection process was completed, it was time to process the data and understand it properly. In this section the process of understanding will be presented.

3.5.1 Transcription of interviews

As mentioned earlier, a sound recorder was present during all the interviews, and the sound files allowed for accurate transcription of the raw data (Jacobsen, 2015). Due to ethical considerations, a few factors were anonymised, such as name, ethnicity, and workplace (Tjora, 2017). During this process, one is faced with the consideration of the level of detail (Johannessen et al., 2016). It was decided that during any hesitation when expressing themselves or prolonged silence will be expressed by three dots (...), and if they abruptly switch words mid-sentence then it will be expressed with a dash and a comma and continue with writing the statements (-,). Other sounds such as laughter was also written down.

The aim was to keep the transcription as fair to the sound file as possible, however some liberties were made. Most of them spoke in Trønder-dialect with a varying degree of accent from their native language, thus it was decided that all words will be transcribed into bokmål-Norwegian. There was also little to no correction on the grammar. In chapter 4 where the empirical findings are presented the grammar for the sake of the flow of the text. Due to COVID-19 two of the interviews had to be conducted through online communication programs (such as Skype, Teams) and that caused some technical weaknesses, such as the recorder seemed to struggle to pick up what was said at times. In such situation it created difficulty in understanding every single word. However, it did not take away from the

substance of the statements. Fortunately, such situations were not often, but when it did occur liberty of interpreting what they meant was allowed. The process of transcribing allowed the understanding and solidification of the data, and this led to further reflections surrounding the analysis (Jacobsen, 2015).

3.5.2 Categorising and coding of data

There are various coding strategies out there and there is no all-for-one analysis process (Tjora, 2018). After the interviews a lot of data was on hand and which needed to be broken down for the copious amount of data to be manageable. The transcriptions of the raw data allows for the use of various data-based analysis programs (Jacobsen, 2015). A program such as this is NVivo 12, which was used during the analysis process. The process of breaking down the data is called *coding*, and Tjora (2018) presents two steps to the coding process – empirical coding and grouping of codes. *Empirical coding* means that the codes are close to the statements of the respondents, and not based on theoretical codes. This was found to be a good aspect for this thesis, as this method relatively reduced the influences of various theories and expectations before embarking on the analysis of the empirical findings.

During the coding and analysis process, the empirical coding was done in two phases to make sure that the data is well-understood by the researcher and are as close as possible to the empirical data. Initially, the coding started with the first transcription document, and then continued to the other transcripts. The codes that were generated during the first document were used, and newer codes were created where it was needed (Tjora, 2018). During the second phase, a revision of the first coding sets was done, by going through the various codes and assessing if the coding were actually representative of the statements. During this process a few codes were changed and come new codes were also created. This process is believed to have strengthened the analysis and gave a good overview of the interviews.

In the next step *grouping of codes* were made out of the empirical coding. The codes that were related to the same topic were sorted into an overarching code, as in the code group, while there were other codes which did not seem relevant for the research questions anymore (Tjora, 2018). The categorisation of these codes helped with seeing the connection between the data and relevant prior research, and the overarching code groups became the main findings in which will be presented in the analysis. During this process it was not forgotten that one as a researcher is reconstructing the social phenomena which this thesis is exploring, and in the hands of other researchers it might be different (Bell et al., 2019; Tjora, 2017). As

mentioned earlier this thesis has an interchanging approach to inductive and deductive research. Due to this the groupings and the empirical data acted as a guide during the process of further dive into prior research to solidify the empirical findings (Bell et al., 2019). This caused a re-evaluation of the theories and prior research which seemed relevant before starting the data collection process. The categorisation gave an indication of what was necessary for a good discussion and analysis of the data, and this caused a larger quantity of the prior research gathered to be changed. When the coding and categorisation were done, and correct and relevant theory were found, the forming of the analysis was ready to be made.

3.6 Quality

This chapter will defend the quality of this thesis. The most important quality criteria are reliability, validity, and generalisation (Tjora, 2017). The relevance of these terms has been discussed among qualitative researchers, as these terms typically have connotations that link to quantitative research (Bell et al., 2019). However, these criteria are well established within social and business research and will be used in this thesis as well (Bell et al., 2019; Tjora, 2017).

3.6.1 Reliability

Reliability can be understood as the degree research can be replicated by other researchers, and them being able to conclude the same results (Bell et al., 2019). One of the main motivators behind this study was the researcher's own background and personal interest on the topic. From the start, there was a wish to become more educated on the topic, and to be able to bring something new to the discourse. In the lines of what researchers (Bell et al., 2019; Jacobsen, 2015; Tjora, 2017) have already discussed it is nearly impossible to obtain complete neutrality within qualitative research, and the motivations of the researcher become "noise" or "disruptions" within the project (Tjora, 2017). Thus, it is important to be aware of how one's own position affects the research process and the outcomes of the study (Tjora, 2017). The researcher is a person with minority background, and this proved to affect the respondents in different ways. Before the actual interview, some informants would question the researcher's motives and intentions with this study, and some seemed curious while others appeared to be more defensive and not trusting. When the researcher explained her background and motivations with the study, some respondents seemingly relaxed and became more open, while others continued to be cautious. The explanation for this may be the fact

that it is a sensitive topic, and they had their position in the company in mind during the interview situation.

Several things were done in an attempt to increase the reliability and reduce the "presence of the researcher". The use of sound recorder allowed for accurate transcriptions, and as Tjora (2017, p. 237) put it this allows for the "voice" of the respondent to reach the reader through direct citations. By working in a structured manner, the goal was to reproduce the raw data most concretely. This was done through *thematic analysis* (Bell et al., 2019). This means that the transcriptions were analysed by using NVivo and coding the text by finding reoccurring themes. See section 4.5.2 for a detailed description of the coding process.

3.6.2 Validity

Validity is concerned with if the outcomes of the research answer the research questions. As is the nature of qualitative research, this methodology allows for more leeway in regards of changing the research questions as the study progresses, which can increase the validity (Bell et al., 2019). The issue, or rather the challenge, with this study is that it is attempting to describe a reality which is not observable with the naked eye (Jacobsen, 2015). As mentioned in the sub-sections on hermeneutics and social constructivism, according to these philosophies, human beings are self-interpreting social actors who construct their social reality (Nyeng, 2017). The challenge lies within the fact that the researcher, who is a self-interpreting social actor, has contributed to the construction of the outcomes in this thesis, through the dialogue with the respondents, whom also are self-interpreting social actors. Being aware of this through the philosophy of science, reducing the impact of personal interpretations of the researcher was attempted. Firstly, before going out into the field the research process started by looking into previous research within the research area. This was proven to be helpful as it became a guiding hand, without it being leading for the research and data collection itself. It also contributed to the development of the interview guide. After the data collection and analysis process, further digging in previous research took place to be able to compare, as well as to confirm, the findings. As it was mentioned earlier in section 3.2.1, this is part of the interchanging approach to the inductive and deductive relationship between the theory and data (Bell et al., 2019).

3.6.3 Generalisation

A generalisation is something every research study is aiming to achieve (Bell et al., 2019; Thagaard, 1998; Tjora, 2017). Thagaard (1998) prefers the term *transferability* in regards of qualitative research, and states that the important aspect of qualitative research, such as this thesis, is if the theoretical and empirical findings can be transferred to other research fields or can be applied in larger contexts. This study is not only relevant within the researcher's research field, but also in others, such as social studies, minority and diversity studies and so on. Ideally, the aim is to achieve theoretical generalisation, or what Tjora (2017) calls *conceptual generalisation*. As explained before the goal is to look at the variations of the experiences of the women, and the sample size is a very heterogeneous group as well. Thus generalisation will be difficult to achieve. However, with conceptual generalisation, one attempts to validate the findings through the solidification of the empirical data and prior research. By using an interchanging approach between inductive and deductive methodology, it led to a continuous flow between the theory, data and analysis (Bell et al., 2019). By using relevant prior research, the thesis is brought to a higher level, and which can be applied in other research fields as well. Therefore, this will strengthen the quality of the thesis, in the lines of validity and generalisation (Tjora, 2017).

3.7 Ethical considerations

Within business research, ethics is an important part prior, during and post research process. Bell et al. (2019) present four main ethical principles. However, three of them will be relevant: avoidance of harm, informed consent and privacy, as well as an ethical principle from Jacobsen (2015) about the correct presentation of data. These principles will be looked at in turn during this sub-section.

3.7.1 Avoidance of harm

Harm to participants can come in many forms. However, the biggest potential harm in this study is in the form of stress, and harm to future employment or career prospects (Bell et al., 2019, p. 114). As Thagaard (1998) puts it, confidentiality is about the right to protect your own private life, and this was a high priority from the start of the research process. All of the respondents and the institutions they belong to are anonymised. As the female respondents can be viewed as a vulnerable group, are not only their identities, organisations, and places anonymised, but also their ethnicity, age and how long they have lived in Norway. Questions

regarding the participants' ethnicity, education level, organisation, age, and residency in Norway, was asked due to sample data-mapping. These are presented in the presentation of the empirical data in Chapter 4.

3.7.2 Informed consent

Before contacting potential participants, an in-depth information letter was constructed. In the letter, there was a description of the project, the research questions that will be analysed, their rights as participants, and the right to withdraw their consent. They were also informed about the data collection method and the use of a voice recorder under the interview (Bell et al., 2019). NSD approved this letter; the approval of the research project is in appendix 8.2. As mentioned earlier, an initial e-mail, with a detailed description of the project, was sent to the organisations for them to forward to potential respondents. Once they e-mailed the researcher about their interest, a follow-up e-mail with the information letter attached was sent. Thus, they got to make an informed decision before deciding to participate (Bell et al., 2019).

3.7.3 Privacy

During the interviews, there were some questions which might be deemed as personal or invasive, especially for the minority women. There were questions which could reveal sensitive information about the workplace, their leaders and colleagues, but also regarding their personal experiences with various challenges such as discrimination. As this is a relatively sensitive topic, not only for the participant but also for the workplace, anonymity was deemed necessary from the start (Bell et al., 2019; Tjora, 2017). Keeping the recording on any private units such as the phone and computer was deemed to be a potential security risk (Bell et al., 2019). Thus, after the interviews, the voice recordings were uploaded to an external online drive which belonged to the university and were deleted from the recorder. The audio files one-by-one were downloaded onto a private computer for transcriptions purposes and were continuously deleted as the transcriptions were finished.

3.7.4 Correct presentation of data

“The quality of the in-depth interviews is based on the trust built up between the researcher and the informant, which is especially important where we research sensitive topics” (Tjora, 2017, p. 116). The participants have the right to be correctly represented without the falsification of data and outcomes. This also applies to the data being presented in their

correct context (Jacobsen, 2015). It is impossible to present the outcomes and data in their complete original context (Jacobsen, 2015), however, the data was given a lot of respect and was kept as true to their nature as much as possible.

4. Empirical findings

In this chapter the empirical findings will be presented. As mentioned, interviews have been conducted to gather these data, and to separate the respondents they will be addressed according to table 2. All interviews, but one was conducted in Norwegian, and the citations are translated from Norwegian to English by the researcher. Furthermore, the country of origin will not be added in the presentation of data, however an overview of which continent the respondents come from can be seen in figure 1. Linguistic corrections have been made to the citations wherever necessary without losing the meaning. The correction was made to avoid that any of the respondents will appear less capable in any way when the citations are taken out of its bigger context. Grammatical corrections have also been conducted to secure a natural flow for the reader. Relatively many citations are presented to be able to give the reader the opportunity to make up their own understanding on the topic and the findings.

During the data processing few main topics stood out and these will be presented as chronologically as possible from the experiences from the labour market, the work situation, and to the career opportunities and advancement.

4.1 Empirical findings on their experiences on the labour market and recruitment in organisations

In this section the empirical findings that fall under research question 1, “*How do highly educated women with minority background experience the labour market and recruitment processes?*” will be presented.

4.1.1 “Someone I knew...”

The importance of social network came through from the interviews as half of the respondents stated that they found their first relevant job through someone’s recommendation. Someone from the university circle of respondent 1 [R₁] recommended her to apply for a position, “*I got a recommendation from someone I studied with. He was in the field before me, and recommended me to hand in an application, and then I chose to hand it personally to the supervisor.*” While others made use of their network from the institutions they would have contact with, R₄ stated,

“When I took my teaching degree I had contact with a school [which provide extended learning programmes for minorities] and my daughter was already there. So, I had

contact with the principle and the management, and they knew that I took such an education and knew about my first language. It was easier for me to get a job there.”

Although R8 did not find her graduate job through her connections, however she stated the importance of having a social network and the signals it can provide to recruiters,

“Social network! That has a lot to say, but then again that is complicated as well. The bigger network you have, or the more Norwegian friends you have, the better you will end up talking and writing. That matters a lot, because Norwegians... everyone knows everyone. So even if you have a really difficult name and pronunciation, they look at a picture of you, and thinking that you are from somewhere in Asia, but if you have mutual friends who can vouch for you, then that straight away becomes a type of gateway.”

4.1.2 “The fastest way to include myself in the society is by learning the language”

From the respondents it came through that language skills are important on the labour market as a minority woman. The lack of language skills was seen as a barrier, R4 expressed that, *“when you arrive at an adult age then you cannot speak like a native, and this... regardless what you try it will be an obstacle”*. Thus, for a lot of the respondents learning the Norwegian language was very important as a tool to better include oneself in the society, R5 expressed that, *“when I moved here, the first thing I said was “okay, now I have to learn Norwegian, if I want to live here I have to”. The fastest way to include myself in the society is by learning the language”*. In a similar vein, the need to prove to recruiters that one masters the language was brought up by a lot of the respondents. R8 stated that,

“Surname has heck of a lot to say because when I had my maiden name it was very difficult. My perception is that people might think straight away that you cannot write well enough or you cannot communicate well enough, and that you cannot talk properly”.

She continues to explain that,

“You have to prove that you have good Norwegian language skills both written and verbally, and I think the way to do it is by writing a really good job application where you have such a rich language and where you can use difficult expressions”.

4.1.3 “You have to continuously update yourself to be able to move forward”

From the interviews it does come forth that education and having the correct competence is a priority for most of the women. For the women who moved to Norway as an adult, getting their foreign education validated and accepted in Norway seem to be a struggle. R5 explained how her doctorate position in Norway helped her avoid that hurdle,

“They evaluated my marks because for a doctorate you need to have A or B, and I had equivalent to A marks from my studies. They said yes you can apply, and they gave me the green light. Then I applied and got it, but if I had not gotten the opportunity to have the doctorate degree then I am sure I had to study two years at [educational institution], [...] and I would have come to the labour market later than what I did”.

Education is seen as a tool to be able to move forward as stated by R1,

“It is about having to update yourself at the same time. You are never fully trained, fully educated, you have to continuously update yourself to be able to move forward. But then the question is, if I [rhetorical] do not get the opportunity to participate in the labour market, and to be a citizen, then how will I update myself? How should I move forward?”

Similarly, due to fierce competition on the labour market, education is seen as a way to open up opportunities, R4 states that,

“[I] thought of getting continuing education, both to develop myself and to become attractive on the labour market too. So I understood that education is important to get a job and to have a good and broad competence, because in a way we are competing with ethnic Norwegians and it is not easy because when an [available] position appears, there are 100-200 people who apply for it and you... kind of stand a little behind”.

The importance of formal papers was brought up by R2, *“Papers have a lot to say and count for a lot, and I think if you hold on and show what you know, then you will get it! That’s how it has been for me, but maybe it is not like that for everyone”.*

In table 3, the educational level of the respondents is presented.

	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8
Education								
Social sciences and humanities studies								
- 3 years	X					X		X
- 5 + years			X	X				
Economy and administration								
- 3 years								
- 5 + years		X						X
Technology, engineering and architecture								
- 3 years								
- 5 + years					X		X	
Continuing education	X		X	X		X		

Table 4: Overview of education level

4.1.4 “Probably it is not the society or environment that gives us that barrier, it is ourselves.”

The relationship the respondents had to their gender and ethnicity seem to be ambiguous. There were some respondents that did not experience that either dimension mattered to them on the labour market. As R2 stated, “*I do not think of it often, but it is a fact that I am from [native country]. I am the type of person that has confidence in what I can do... like it or not it is not my business, but I will show what I can and then [they] can decide*”. Similarly, R6 expressed that during recruitment processes it did not seem to matter,

“I recently applied for a position within the substance [use] field and I got really high up on the list. I did not get the job, but I got quite high up [in the recruitment process], and there I do not think that was something which would be an advantage in the job because I do not have many patients with minority background. So I did not experience it as having any importance really”.

R4 expressed that she sees herself as a *minority women* – two dimensions which are connected to one another. She stated how she felt that there are a lot of things that stood in the way of her getting as far as she did,

“Actually, being a woman is difficult in of itself [laughs] just got to say that. When you are an immigrant woman it is extra difficult. When you have social control in a way too, and to come here at an adult age, to stand on your own feet, you learn the language and take education, finding a job... In a way there are many things that are standing in your way”.

On the other hand, R7 expressed that her minority, rather than her gender, was of significance. In regards of her gender she saw it as a life process, but not as a barrier,

“For younger ladies it’s a process, a life process as well. Okey, you finish the education and start working, and will then have a baby and then get maternity leave, right? And so on, and have more babies probably, and you’re stuck at home and sit the kids. I do not feel that it is a barrier in my work, I myself have two kids and have been on maternity leave for a long time. Yeah, probably minority is the one... probably it is not the society or environment that gives us that barrier, it is ourselves. Because for example if I can speak fluent Norwegian things will be much easier, I guess”.

Similarly, R3 expressed that her minority background brought many challenges,

“Firstly references are not valid in a way. Nobody cares about what you have done before if you have not done it in Norway, even though I have actual reference letters which I have gotten translated to Norwegian. And especially in the beginning the language [from others] were expressed as DO.YOU.UNDERSTAND.WHAT.I.AM.SAYING and it was a bit humiliating at times”.

4.1.5 “I grew up seeing my mother reach the highest position she could get in her career”

From over half of the respondents it comes forth that their upbringing has affected their outlook on life and how they face challenges as well. Most of the women have been instilled with values, norms and attitudes which have functioned as motivation and strength later on in their lives. As R4 stated,

“Growing up, I learned basic norms and values, including being able to stand on my own two feet and assert my opinions and views. For my family, it was very important

that I earned my own money and managed my own life. A good career in a way was the key to being independent”.

For R7 a poem which her mother used to tell her as a child has become a lesson on life,

“My mom would often say “Nothing in the world is difficult for one who sets his mind on it”. Original it was a poem by Chairman Mao, it was popular during that period.

Thus, I gradually understood that big things can be built up day by day, little by little”.

For some of the women the importance of education was emphasised during their childhood and their parents were viewed as role models, R5 sums up their statements,

“Education was always important in our home. [My parents] always said that education was the best tool they could give us, and although private universities are expensive in [native country], especially architecture education, they always paid everything which was needed to give it to us. In addition, I grew up seeing my mother reach the highest position she could get in her career, and even though she worked hard, I never felt like she stopped being a mother. I grew up with her as a role model on how to find the right balance between being a career woman and mother, and I'm trying to imitate that now”.

4.2 Empirical findings on their working situation

In this section the empirical findings that fall under research question 2, “*How do highly educated women with minority background experience their current working situation??*” will be presented.

4.2.1 “I have a lot of responsibility on my shoulders and I get a lot of freedom...”

Overwhelmingly, what emerged from the interviews is that the respondents experience that they have their leaders’ trust and confidence. Most of the women have a lot of responsibilities and are responsible for various projects. As R6 stated,

“I have a lot of responsibility on my shoulders and I get a lot of freedom and really to do what I think is right in the cases. [...] There are many families and cases that are quite challenging and life situations that are challenging, in addition I have to present quite a lot of what I work with and things like that. So more than enough of challenges and things to do, I would say. The days can go very fast on some days.”

As R7 could tell she has a lot of responsibilities, “*I myself am responsible for two labs and projects*” and she continues to tell that, “*I always have more than enough things to do so*

sometimes I have to pick what I can do and sometimes I have to split it up between my colleagues". Being empowered by her leaders was brought up by R₈, as well as how they believe in her even when she can be insecure in certain situations,

"I have a very good leader and I am very lucky. They are very talented people. Sometimes I feel like I get more responsibility than what I want [laughs], but they have very good communication [skills]. They know me well and they are very good experts on people who occasionally can see when I'm not sure if I can do it and they have faith that I can do it. It's a kind of empowerment, they are pretty good at it and I like it very much, they are very good".

4.2.2 "I have a lot of freedom in my job, it's really amazing"

Almost all of the respondents have the impression that their leaders have confidence in them and their capabilities. Most of the respondents stated that they get verbal reaffirmations and feedback from their leaders. For R₁, she hears affirmative feedback from both her leaders and colleagues,

"I often hear that "this is your area, this is something you know, this you can help us with" so there are [colleagues] who come for a lot of guidance at times, because they feel that do not know how to handle cases, certain students. In that regard I think that I can use my competence a little extensively and differently and that is good. It gives a good feeling".

Respondents R₄ stated that she knows that her leader trusts her as he has on multiple occasions praised her for her good work, similarly R₇ says that she is getting praises and feels like their has confidence in her abilities, *"I feel it, also my group leader has also sometimes told me and led me a little bit on what I should do, like developing myself and so on. I feel like he confirms my abilities"*. Much like the other respondents, R₈ expressed that she feels that her leaders have confidence in her abilities and gets verbal affirmations for it, however that it is not something that she gets for free,

"They are good at saying it, but as I said they are really good at communicating with people [laughs], so I am happy. Obviously, it does not come for free, as in when you deliver time after time after time, they get more confidence in you eventually. You have to do a good job for them to think so".

For R₆ it seems her leader's trust and confidence in her is reflected through the relatively large degree of freedom she has in her work,

“I have a lot of freedom in my job, it's really amazing. Really it is... I do not even exaggerate when I say I have a lot of confidence [from her leaders] and it is absolutely amazing really. I have their confidence, they believe in me a lot, and they truly trust me. So, I think it is completely unusual”.

4.2.3 “We have two different cultures, two different lives”

All of the respondents stated that they experience their workplace as being inclusive. Factors that increase the feeling of inclusivity are being respected, social activities, the efforts of their leaders and nearest colleagues. R1’s workplace is consciously work on being inclusive and it is something all the employees are working on, and she stated that, *“we are included, I do not feel that we are being shut out in any way”*. According to R3’s experience her current workplace is the best she has been at,

“It is the best workplace I have had. I have worked at many different places, so I think it is very good, but which colleagues you have has a lot to say. Especially our colleagues from [division], it is an incredibly good working environment, you are taken care of, you are accepted as you are”.

However, almost all of the respondents mentioned that their minority to a certain degree affected their social relations with their colleagues. The mention of self-exclusion due to her minority background was brought up by R1. A sense of dissonance between her native culture and the culture of her colleagues, which she feels negatively affects her relations with them,

“We are different, and I experience that sometimes it becomes a big challenge for me... almost like a barrier. It is not about me not being included, but I do not want to include myself. Because I do not like myself there, maybe we do not have the same interests, we do not have the same experiences, we do not have the same references, so what am I going to share with my colleagues, right? We have two different cultures, two different lives”.

However, she also states that the individuals themselves also need to work on the problem, *“minority women have a job to do in regards of the social. You have to create new ways of thinking, new ways of living, change your lifestyle a little bit, do not be afraid to take challenges. You need to do this if you want to function at the workplace”*. Similarly, adapting to the working environment by “breaking” the social and culture codes was brought up by R4,

“It is difficult to adapt to the work environment. You have to work hard to adapt yourself to the work environment. It is important that you break the social code, because you already have a different social code from before. The cultural code has to be broken and the job you have to fight for, be engaged for it, burn for it. I think I succeeded because of that”.

For R7 difference between her and her colleagues seem to increase during times such as lunch breaks, *“when we have lunch everyone is speaking Norwegian. They probably take care of you in the beginning period, but it cannot always be like that”*. A sense of resignation was felt as she said the following,

“I have to admit they communicate well with each other and they can make jokes with each other, and they have quite similar hobbies like [they] can start talking about the snow while skiing during the weekend. But those are just... the work is the work, and as long as we do the work, we communicate well in the team, it is not much different”.

4.2.4 “Of course Norwegians will be chosen first and then you will be chosen later...”

Overwhelmingly, most of the respondents stated that they did not experience that at their current workplace. Only R3 recounted that usually there will be stereotypical questions, but she usually interprets it as curiosity. However, she stated that during her previous job where she worked as a cleaner she had an discussion with her Norwegian colleagues about her struggle on the labour market,

“We were three cleaners who worked at a school, through an employment company, and all of us three had academical background. All of us has higher education and none of our Norwegian colleagues did. They were usually people who were older, like 45 [years old]. So we talked about the labour market, how it was difficult since all of us actually wanted to work with something else, and [we] had completely different background, completely different prior [work] experiences and education and such, and like here we are. And then one colleague said to us like no, but you guys cannot expect anything else, you are from other countries, and of course Norway is for Norwegians, like of course Norwegians will be chosen first and then you will be chosen later”.

While R3 experiences such attitudes from her colleagues, R1 had an incident at her former workplace, which left her thinking that the decisions made were due to her minority

background. R₁ was encouraged to apply for a new position, a team leader role, in the same organisation and she took it as a hint from the management that she would fit in the role,

“At the time I was one of those who had the most experience and I had a lot of responsibilities within the field, and it was natural for me to get a few steps ahead. Then an ethnic Norwegian woman started working with us. She had not been there for long, and she would not have been able to do a good job either as she was often absent, and there were other challenges in the picture. [...] We applied for the position, she applied as well. And she got the position, which was something I struggled to accept because I felt unfairly treated due to my background [...] My ethnic background had stopped me”.

As mentioned earlier regarding these findings, most of the women did not feel that they are treated differently, and even R₁ and R₃ who had those experiences do not feel such treatment in their current workplace.

4.3 Empirical findings on their job opportunities and future prospects

In this section the empirical findings that fall under research question 3, *“How do the women experience their career opportunities in order to advance in their careers?”* will be presented.

4.3.1 “Norway is full of opportunities if you know how to use them”

Most of the respondents seem to have the impression that they have equal opportunities for potential career advancement. For respondents R₅ and R₇ there seems to be an already existing career ladder, as R₅ stated, *“as a researcher you almost have a career path as a researcher, senior researcher, and you can become research leader”*. R₇ confirms this by stating that there are many in her field who start as researcher and then take on a leadership role as their get more responsibilities. In the company where R₈ works there seems to be the same,

“You start at one level and then you move up almost automatically after two years, and then you move up to manager level where I am now. For example, one has to go through a process. We have a lot of development goals which are measured through different parameters”.

The opportunities being many in the Norwegian labour market was brought up by R₁, *“what I think is that in the Norwegian labour market, in Norway, in the educational system there are*

full of opportunities. Full of opportunities. It is just getting to know how you should use those opportunities". In regard to herself and her current capabilities she stated that,

"There are always opportunities to further develop yourself, to further your education, and to build competence. [...] With the competence I have today, I do not think there is a possibility for me, but I can develop myself further and build on the competence that I already have. So that I can have bigger responsibilities, with personnel responsibilities and leadership responsibilities. That again demands time and energy, you need to have excess energy to be able to do something new. I think I would have taken the opportunity if I wanted to".

Others such as R2 who stated that her previous job as well as the one she currently holds can lead to a leadership position as long as she wanted it to, *"in the job I had, and the job I have now, if one wants to be a leader then one can become one right now [snaps with her fingers]"*.

4.3.2 "I was very interested in the management when I was young"

From the interviews the lack of leadership ambitions was apparent. Two of the respondents used to have ambitions of being further up in the hierarchy or the system when they were younger. They come with various reasons to why this desire is not with them anymore. For R2 she came to realise as time passed by that she was more interested in the profession of her field rather than the management,

"I was very interested in the management when I was young, but I found out while working that I was more interested in the profession, than to lead. Yes, you get involved in the profession when you are a leader too, but I am more interested in the professional aspect which is part of building the system, changing systems. One can do that as a leader too, but you also need foot soldiers who can really do it, and I feel like I am more there as a foot soldier than in a management position".

She also stated this in regard to her current position, *"when you work at the level that we do, then you already are at the same level as many leaders"*.

There were some whom did not see leadership in their future, nor did they want it to do. The common response from these were that they were satisfied with their current work and did not want the responsibilities that comes with such positions, as R3 stated, *"I do not want to drown in paperwork and reports"*. The passion for her current job was evident with

R3, *“I want to continue to do what I am doing, I love teaching and I do not have such big ambitious career plans about becoming a leader and department manager”*. She continued by mentioning her students, *“I think I will lose contact with the students and it is because of the students that I am here”*. Similarly, R7 found that, *“it is easier to work with things that working with people [laughs]... Yeah, it is not that easy task”*. For R6 the demanding nature of leadership positions seems to be the deciding factor as she states that no matter the paycheck it would not be worth it for her,

“I think it is very demanding to be leader and to deal with, let's say 30-40 employees, maybe more, maybe less. They have their needs, things go fast, there are crossing pressures. You have demands from your leaders and then you have demands from the employees”.

While R5 did not rule out the possibility, *“if I want, yes I think so. And if the cards play in my favour to say it like that. Of course, it is not just up to me, there are a lot more to it than so, but in regard to this interview that my background would play any role, no I do not think so”*. In a similar line, following the development of responsibility without setting a goal seems to be the solution for R8,

“Gradually we get more and more tasks and bigger and bigger responsibilities. It's a lot of fun, and you contribute more and more, and you get more responsibility for those below you. It's just fun. So, it is in a way to follow that development. Of course, I could have said that I will be at that level of position in so many years, but I feel it will be a gradual and natural development. I do not want to set a goal”.

4.3.3 “We were not as visible as I thought...”

The visibility of non-Western minorities in over half of the organisations seems to be lacking. In regards of female colleagues with non-Western minority background the visibility seems to vary from workplace to workplace. At the workplaces of R4, R5, R6 and R7 there seems to be quite many women with non-Western minority background. One thing to note is that R4 and R6 work in the same institution, while R5 and R7 share the same workplace. R7 stated that, *“Quite few... I see them because they have different hair color, it is very apparent when with blond and yellow [people]”*. While R6 could tell that the women she works with have a lot of presence, *“at least in my department, I experience that [they] raise their hands and opinions, and get a lot of recognition because they are very good in their own fields”*.

Both R₁ and R₂ who work under the same organisation, however in different divisions, and R₃ concluded that there are few minorities with non-Western minorities in their organisations or divisions, a R₂ stated,

“From what I have seen, myself and another maybe, from South-America. I do not know, I have not seen more. But I do not know, there are after all 5000 employees in [the organisation] and I have not met them all. I have met 120 up to now I think”.

R₁ stated after thinking on the matter, *“we were not as visible as I thought”.*

Regarding female leaders of non-Western background, overwhelmingly none of the women could recall any leaders with such specifications. R₃ summed up their answers, *“It is such that department managers are ethnic Norwegians, also all the large and small leaders here are ethnic Norwegian”.*

4.3.4 “You have to be one of them to lead them...”

There is divided opinion among the women regarding non-Western minority women occupying management positions. Half of the women believe that nothing stands in the way as long as one has the right capabilities. R₈ summarises their statements, *“I may be a little naive, but as I perceive it if you are good, if you do your job well, if you have the qualities and the ... capabilities as it is called in good Norwegian, if you really want it then you can be [a leader]”.* For the other half the expectations seems to be grim as can be felt from R₃'s statement,

“I think that maybe the explanation is quite often... not that you have or do not have opportunities, but that I think quite many are in a situation such as mine. Because we who have come to Norway as adults, it takes a long time for us to get on the same level as Norwegians at our age. So they kind of have better conditions because they have longer experience, and they have longer seniority, and then they have maybe studied more even those who are of equal age as me, because I had to start later, but they might start just after high school. I had to start when I was 27. So it's a little hard to say, I think maybe if you want, you can do it, but you have to be strong”.

Being like Norwegians was stated by R₇, *“The leadership is more like... you have to be one of them to lead them, but for us foreigners I think it is the cultural and language things. It is a bit hard to develop in that way”.*

5. Analysis

During this chapter, the empirical findings will be analysed and discussed alongside the theory and the case description. As mentioned in the introduction, this thesis has three research questions which will be examined. It starts with the findings for research question 1, where the factors which affect the experiences the women have on the labour market and the recruitment process. The discussion will move along to research question 2, where the findings related to their experiences at the workplace will be discussed, and lastly, the discussion will end with the findings for research question 3 about their career opportunities and prospects.

5.1 Research question 1: How do highly educated women with minority background experience the labour market and recruitment processes?

In this section of the discussion, the key finding regarding research question 1 will be discussed. From the empirical data, a few key factors come to play, such as social network, the role of upbringing, education, and language skills. These findings will be analysed and discussed, along with the theory on social capital and human capital.

5.1.1 The relevancy of social network

In this part of the analysis, the role of a social network will be discussed alongside the theory about social capital. In the theory, social capital is presented as a resource which creates value through the relations between individuals and organisations (Hitt & Duane, 2002). It is believed that social networks are important resources to gain access to the labour market. The lack of a relevant social network is seen as a structural barrier which inhibits minorities from participating in the workforce (Brekke et al., 2020; Thorshaug & Valenta, 2012).

From the interviews, the relevancy of social network is obvious. Half of the women have gotten their first relevant job through someone's recommendation, and these jobs became the start of their current career paths. This indicates that the women have been assertive in their job-seeking approach. Respondents, such as R₁, made connections with fellow students while she was studying at university, and it was through these connections that she got recommended her first relevant job after graduating. While the other women have taken advantage of the personal connections, they have made with people working in various institutions such as social services and the school their children went to. Thus, this indicates

that the university environment and the other institutional environments can be important resources to obtain relevant social networks for minority women.

One has to remember that after moving to Norway, these women had to start building their social network and references all over again (Røed & Bratsberg, 2005). According to research, the social network of minorities are usually limited to people within their own communities (Thorshaug & Valenta, 2012), and which they typically have strong ties with (J. S. Coleman, 1988). However, the people in their social networks which have helped them in finding these jobs are people which the women have weak ties with. This confirms that making use of weaker ties in one's social network is the most beneficial and can have a positive impact when accessing the labour market (Granovetter, 1973). Identifying people as information channels and knowledge sources can become a useful tool. As R8 mentioned having a social network can become a “*gateway*” in the labour market, and the overall impression is that the women do identify it as such. Their use of the weak ties in their social networks have contributed to their access to a relevant field, and this indicates that these women have cleverly made use of their bridging capital.

As Putnam (2000) describes bridging capital, it consists of relations between people of various cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. An example of this is R4, who had good contact with the management team of the school her daughter attended. It was through her connection with the management which led to her obtaining her first relevant job. This indicates that the women have made an effort in building a network which does not solely rely on their immediate community. According to Putnam (2000), bridging capital is the most important type of social capital to be able to move forward. These women have certainly been able to move forward.

5.1.2 The impact of their upbringing

This part of the analysis will also be discussed alongside the theory about social capital, and especially in regard to bonding capital. Bonding capital described as the strong and close ties one develops with family members and close friends. It is believed that families can have an impact on the attitudes of minority women. According to IMDi (2007), some minority women and their families can have "value-based" attitudes which prioritise women's role at home, especially those from certain non-Western countries. This restricts their participation in the labour market. In regard to the respondents, most of the women could tell that their families

have had a large impact on them as people. Their families have affected their values and mindsets, but also have functioned as role models.

From the empirical data, it becomes clear that for most of the women, their present strengths come from their upbringing and the values which have been instilled in them at a rather young age. It can be assumed that not only does bonding capital provide emotional and material support to these women (Putnam, 2000), but it can also provide with the mental tools to achieve their goals and to face various challenges that may come upon the labour market as these women have been taught to stand on their own two feet and to be resilient. For respondents such as R4, her family taught her that to be able to be independent, having a career is important. This has led to her strong belief in developing a career and to whatever it takes to achieve it. Their upbringing has taught them not only values but also lessons which have impacted their mindsets. R7, for example, recites a poem from Chairman Mao, which her mother used to tell her during her childhood. Being taught this has had an effect on how she not only views the world but also how she approaches it. This can be applied for most of the women. Their upbringing has taught them the value of a career, but also to be resilient and work hard to achieve their goals.

Bridging capital has been mentioned in the earlier section of the analysis about social networks. Instead of comparing bonding capital and bridging capital, the interest here lies in the combination of the two. One can perhaps view it this way, that the bonding capital, as in the upbringing of the family, have prepared the women to take advantage of their bridging capital, by grasping the opportunities that come their way. As mentioned earlier, half of the respondents got their first relevant job in Norway after graduation, through someone in their bridging capital, as in their social network (Putnam, 2000).

For some of the respondents, their parents have acted as role models. The women explained how their parents also have higher education, and during their childhood, the importance of education was emphasised. Seeing how far their parents have made it, seems to act as inspiration for many respondents to do academically well. In the case of for example R5, her mother, in particular, has and still is acting as a role model. She has grown up with a mother who had the right balance between a career and motherhood, and this is continuing to inspire her to this day to do the same.

As mentioned earlier, some minority women and their families can have restrictive "value-based" attitudes (IMDi, 2007) which inhibit their participation in the workforce. However, these findings indicate how certain key figures in one's childhood can impact how one approaches certain aspects of one's life. Having strong role models and being taught the

value of working hard, getting an education, and having a career, seem to have impacted them how they are as job seekers and as human capital holders.

5.1.3 Investment in education

Theory on human capital will be of relevancy during this part of the analysis. Typically, the female minority population is polarised with either lower education or higher education, and in particular minority women from Asia and Africa seem to have lower levels of education (Nadim & Fjell, 2019; Steinkellner, 2015). With the case of this thesis, all of the respondents participating in this study have higher education, and thus they contribute to the latter end of the polarisation. Their levels of education can be seen in table 3. During the interviews, the women would speak strongly about having education and the need to have the correct competence. Many of them are also focused on continuing education to increase their relevant competence in their respective fields. Much in agreement with Becker (1994), the women view education as one of the most important investments in themselves, as human capital holders. The women seem to correlate their education and competence to their value on the labour market. The experiences these women have had with the educational system can be divided into two paths, those that view it as a *bringer of opportunities* and those that have struggled to get their education from abroad approved in Norway.

5.1.3.1 *Bringer of opportunities*

The higher education level one has, the easier it is for minorities to actively participate in the workforce (Steinkellner, 2015). According to the research by Håpnes and Berg (2004), this does not easily apply for minority women, and in particular those with a non-Western background. Despite their higher education, they continue to struggle in the labour market. However, considering the women participating in this study this they seem to be more inclined towards the findings of Steinkellner (2015) than Håpnes and Berg (2004). The Norwegian government view education as an important tool in regard to minorities and their employment (NOU 2017: 2). This seems to also be heavily implied by the recruiters the women have come across as well. The women have taken higher education for various reasons. However, most of them have an awareness around the importance of formal papers, and that seems to have acted as a guiding action for some such as R1, R2 and R4. For all of the respondents, education is seen as a way to move forward in life, as well as a way to get more opportunities in the labour market. From their attitudes, it does not seem that the women view

education as a barrier for participating in the labour market, but rather the opposite. For example, for R4 and R8, their job opportunities opened up as they got higher education, a bachelor's degree and a master's degree, respectively. As mentioned earlier, statistics show that minorities have higher education than the majority. This may be an indication that perhaps the respondents are following the high demands of the labour market. However, it is difficult to confidently claim this with the current data.

5.1.3.2 Approval of education from abroad in Norway

For the women who have had parts of their higher education in their native countries and getting it approved in Norway was deemed a struggle. Even after getting it approved, for some it did not improve their situation as a jobseeker. For respondents such as R5, while getting her education approved by NOKUT (The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education), she found out that she had to supplement with two more years of education as the education system in her native country did not “translate” well in Norway (NOU 2017: 2). However, she took an alternative route by applying for a doctorate position without the approval. She got the position, and it enabled her to enter the labour market much earlier than she had if she were to go back to school to supplement her education.

One can say that it was smart of R5 to find such an alternative was lucky to find an alternative solution to her problem. However, in the case of R3, the biggest part of her struggle in the labour market was due to her foreign education and work experience. Not being able to find a relevant job based on her education and work experience led to her applying and working at low-tier and low-complexity jobs. According to Røed and Bratsberg (2005), even if the education is approved, employers have little information about the quality and contents of education from abroad. This creates insecurities for employers, and thus job applicants are de-selected. Her education acted as a barrier, and she had to go back to school to take a master's degree from a Norwegian university, much similar to the research conducted by Søholt (2016). This is a time-consuming process which inhibits early access to the labour market for those that particularly struggle with this (Barne- likestillings- og inkluderingsdepartementet, 2013). This seems to confirm what prior research has stated that approval of foreign education seems to act more as a structural barrier than enabling access to the labour market. However, the opportunities for R3 increased after her master's degree, and she got her current job through this. This confirms the demand for Norwegian-specific capital in the labour market (Schøne, 2005; Thorshaug & Valenta, 2012). As with R3 and R5, R5 was

lucky to be able to find an alternative route, while the same cannot be said about R3. She had to struggle for a long time until she had to go back to school. This begs the question if it is necessary to put so much importance on the approval of education abroad when employers themselves struggle to understand the contents of the education. This seems to only cause a "competence deficit" as Røed and Bratsberg (2005) put it, and delay the access to the labour market.

5.1.4 The importance of language skills

In the theory, it has been identified that Norwegian-specific capital is valued on the labour market and in particular regarding language capabilities. Language as a human capital factor will be relevant in this section of the analysis. According to IMDi (2007), language can be one of the biggest hurdles for minority women as job seekers. The importance of language was brought up by the women in various forms, especially in the phase before getting into the work life. For some, it is a tool for integration and for others, it was important to prove one's language skills. These two viewpoints will be discussed below.

5.1.4.1 *Language as a tool for integration*

For some of the respondents learning the Norwegian language is seen as one of the most important aspects of participating in the workforce, which is also identified by Einarsen (2013). Particularly the respondents who moved to Norway during an adult age find the language a barrier due to the inability to speak as well as natives or minorities born in Norway. The need to learn the language to integrate well into society is brought up by R5, and the sentiments of some of the respondents are the same. The women seem to be aware of their "competence deficit", and in much of agreement of Røed and Bratsberg (2005), they view language skills to be the most important factor in the integration process, not only as new citizens of Norway but also to be able to actively participate in the workforce. Language does not only have a practical meaning, but it also functions as a signal, to the women themselves as well as to others, that they belong and are part of the Norwegian society (Seeberg & Dahle, 2006).

There is an overall consensus among the women that it is necessary to have good language skills as it will improve their chances on the labour market. According to Røed and Bratsberg (2005), lacking communication skills can hinder the job and reduce productivity. However, by prioritising and working on their Norwegian language skills, the women have

been able to demonstrate that they are a productive part of the workforce, and thus have been able to break that barrier.

5.1.4.2 Signalling to recruiters the mastery of the Norwegian language

According to Tronstad (2010), Norwegian employers put a lot of importance on language skills during the recruitment process. Thus, it is an important factor which "makes it" or "breaks it". Among the respondents, the need to prove that one master the language was brought up by many. It is especially important to prove this through the application letter, and this is to increase the chances of getting invited to interviews. There is a need to signal to recruiters that they can communicate well. There seems to be an image of how a Norwegian workplace is supposed to be able to function effectively (Søholt, 2016), and according to Kanter (1993) women and minorities tend to work in low-tier jobs. However, the respondents have obtained positions in the labour market, where good language skills are necessary to conduct the job. The higher one is in the hierarchy, the higher the demands will be as well. All of the women are in positions, where one needs to communicate well with clients and be involved in collaborative problem-solving with colleagues and leaders. There is a practical significance to being able to communicate well with people regarding work and to show that one can be a part of the organisational culture (Seeberg & Dahle, 2006). However, this function loses its practicality when the recruitment process is laced with prejudices in regards to "visible minorities" (Rogstad, 2001).

According to Acker (2006), the gender and ethnicity of a job applicant can affect the judgement of competence. The respondents seem to have a similar impression that one's name can signal a negative judgement of capabilities and competence in the early process of recruitment. This creates a barrier as no chances are given to be able to prove these prejudices wrong when applicants are de-selected before getting to interviews (Midtbøen, 2015; Rogstad, 2001). Part of the "visibility" of minority background is one's name, and it can be of significance on the labour market, as it was one of the things that both R6 and R8 brought up. According to Rogstad (2001), recruiters can have prejudices when they see obviously foreign names, and it creates insecurities regarding the applicants' ability to "fit in" at the workplace, as well as regarding their competence. The women seem to be aware of this, and it is probably the reason why they put heavy importance on being able to communicate one's level of skills. The way they have tackled this barrier may indicate how they have been able to be successful in the labour market.

5.1.5 Summary of research question 1: How do highly educated women with minority background experience the labour market and recruitment processes?

Based on the discussion of the empirical findings and the theory, there seem to be many factors which have played a role in how these women have successfully gotten access to a relevant field. What is common for all the women is their high investment in higher education and the importance they place on learning the Norwegian language. It seems like those are the biggest barriers in which they meet on the labour market, and they have strived hard to overcome them. For a lot of the women, their parents and their upbringing seem to have had an impact on how the women are as career holders today. A social network is interpreted as an important tool, as half of them found their first relevant job through their network. These factors seem to be the most important factors that have impacted their experiences in the labour market.

5.2 Research question 2: How do highly educated women with minority background experience their current working situation?

In this section of the discussion, the key finding regarding research question 2 will be discussed. From the empirical findings, there were some interesting aspects regarding the respondents' working situation which stood out. These findings will be analysed and discussed, along with Joan Acker's theory on inequality regimes. It is important to keep in mind that, as brought up in 1.5, the women work for different hierarchical organisations and thus, their experiences may be affected by the organisational culture, -structure, and -values.

5.2.1 Social relations at the workplace

All of the respondents expressed that their workplaces were very inclusive. Their organisations seem to put effort into inclusivity for all employees. According to Acker (2006), informal interactions at work are based on assumptions on gender and race. This can have an impact on how people behave and their attitudes. Similar to the findings of Rogstad (2001), most of the respondents brought up how their minority background in some way or another affected their social relations with their colleagues.

There were some who mentioned the dissonance between their native culture and the Norwegian culture of their colleagues. There seems to be a pressure of culturally fitting in. However, that seems to have led to social self-exclusion for R1. Without further looking into this, it is difficult to come to a conclusion for why this has happened. However, the

explanation may lie in her previous experiences. According to Bourdieu's habitus, our reality is shaped by ingrained social habits and norms, and by our life experiences (Lizardo, 2004). Acker (2006) states that the gender requirements of work are based on the image of a "white man". From the heavy demand for country-specific capital from the minority workforce (Røed & Bratsberg, 2005; Thorshaug & Valenta, 2012), one can assume that Norwegian organisations are more based on the image of the "ethnic Norwegian person". Not only in the context of formal papers, but also being able to "fit" in, adapt socially and culturally, and to fit into the Norwegian organisational culture (Søholt, 2016). Acker (2006) mentions how from organisation to organisation appropriate behaviour varies based on the organisational culture, the situation itself and how the employees perceive things. One may ask what this does to minorities who have completely different social and cultural codes. When the demand is always pursuing the same expectations and the same "image", the pressure on minorities must be heavy. It seems that it is this pressure that may have led to the conclusion that R₁ and her Norwegian colleagues are too different, and which led to self-inflicted exclusion.

Regarding the demand and pressure for minorities to fit in, the need to put an effort and work hard to be able to adapt to the Norwegian workplace was also mentioned by some of the women. It was pointed out that one needs to "break" the social and culture codes or norms. Cultural- and social understanding as a human capital factor has its importance here. As discussed in section 5.2.3, while the women were job seekers, they experienced that they had to signal to recruiters that they could communicate well and that they could fit. This need does not seem to end even after they get the job. The apparent need to "break social codes" may be the consequence of how the labour market attaches importance to cultural- and social understanding during recruitment processes (Rogstad, 2001). It seems that it spills over to impact how they experience the workplace.

5.2.2 The experience of being discriminated

None of the women spoke of any experience of discrimination, racism or differential treatment at their current workplaces or on the labour market in general. The only two who mentioned it were R₁ and R₃, but those were singular experiences related to their former workplaces. Particularly the interview with R₂ gave a strong impression where she stated, *"Discrimination I think is... often a feeling, and there is something about how you experience things. If you feel discriminated against regardless, then you will feel discriminated against"*.

A lot of the women, and R2, in particular, spoke about discrimination in relation to others and not regarding themselves. This is a curious thing as most of them are "visible" minorities, and according to research by Brekke et al. (2020), minorities from Asia and Africa experience the most discrimination. Gender and ethnicity is part of one's identity, as they are interacting dimensions which affect how one observes and interprets reality (Reid & Comas-Diaz, 1990). Knowing how the respondents identified themselves in relation to these dimensions may give an insight into how their experiences are impacted by this. Half of the women feel that neither their gender nor their ethnicity had any significance in the labour market or during recruitment. They rather see those dimensions of themselves as hard facts. According to Nunez-Smith et al. (2009), one's identification with ethnicity seems to affect how one interprets actions or behaviour which may seem discriminating or as unfair.

On the other hand, some such as R3, R4 and R7 felt that their minority background did act as a barrier. But not based on their ethnicity, but rather in regard to the demands of the labour market such as the lack of language skills, prior work experiences not being valid, and getting Norwegian education. Interestingly, R7 stated that it is usually people themselves who creates barriers. This gives an interesting insight into the potential thought process of some of the women if this is applicable for the others as well. The women are very aware of the demands that the labour market asks for, and particularly the respondents who moved to Norway as adults.

The feeling of discrimination will come forth during what Acker (2006) describes as the *informal interactions while "doing the work"*. The women are highly confident in their own competence and capabilities. This indicates that perhaps their strong sense of beliefs in themselves and in their competence is somehow reflected at the workplace. Research on the glass ceiling indicates that the biggest challenges are at the lowest levels of the hierarchy, and the barriers seem to be reduced the higher one ascends the hierarchy (Bihagen & Ohls, 2006; Zeng, 2011). Looking at it from the perspective of this analysis, it may indicate that the higher the women are in their organisations, less their ethnicity or their genders matter. The women seem to have reached a level where they are judged based on their capabilities and competence, and less based on their ethnicity.

5.2.3 Responsibilities and challenges

As mentioned previously the women work in hierarchical organisations, and as Acker (2006) indicated the steepness of hierarchy could have an effect on *the degree of inequality*, and this

is also related to those in power. In this discussion, those in power are interpreted as the leaders in various hierarchical levels of the organisation. She also stated that organisations have *class hierarchies* which have embedded racial and gender patterns. These patterns can be identified through the interactions and decision-making of those in power.

During the interviews, the respondents would proudly talk about the trust and confidence their leaders have in them. The respondents often hear verbal affirmations and positive feedback regarding their capabilities and their quality of work. These are women that work hard in their profession and are invested in their respective fields, and it seems to reflect in the feedback given to them by their leaders. One of the impressions of the women during the interviews was that they are highly confident in their own capabilities and competence. This may be one of the positive consequences of the interactions between them and their leaders. Being seen by leaders is an important factor early on in women's career for career advancement and mobility (Halrynjo et al., 2015). For R₆, the level of confidence from her leaders seems to be reflected in the relatively high degree of freedom she has, and which again is reflected in her responsibilities.

According to Halrynjo et al. (2015), having responsibilities and challenges early on in the career also has a positive impact on career advancement and mobility. Almost all of the respondents' experience that they have sufficient responsibilities and get challenged by their leaders. These come in the shape of having responsibilities for projects and having a say in how one does the job. The level of responsibilities and challenges they have seems to signal the confidence their leaders have in them and that their capabilities are trusted. These actions are similar to what Yukl (2013) mentions as supportive leadership. Part of such leadership is to develop the skills of employees and providing developmental opportunities. This can lead to employees having confidence in their capabilities, and as mentioned earlier, the women are highly confident in themselves and what they can achieve. R₈ mentioned how she feels empowered by her leaders, and this indicates the importance of those that are in power.

Looking through the lenses of supportive leadership, and assuming that such leadership style is commonplace in their respective organisations, this perhaps allows for the increased mobility in the organisations. By getting more responsibilities and getting challenges, it will develop their capabilities even further and make the women even better qualified for positions higher up in the organisations if that is what they desire as Acker Acker (2006) mentioned that inequalities, and the degree of them, vary from organisation to organisation. Perhaps looking at the women's perceived opportunities and their ambitions will give a better insight into the situation.

5.2.4 Summary of research question 2: How do highly educated women with minority background experience their current working situation?

To summarise these findings, a lot of the women seem to experience that their social relations at the workplace are affected by their minority background, and for one of the respondents it has led to self-exclusion due to cultural differences. All of the women have expressed they do not experience any time of discrimination at their current workplace. This is indicating that at certain levels of the organisation, the ethnicity and gender do not matter and that the higher one, the more one is judged and evaluated based on competence. Lastly, the discussion has looked at how the women experience that they are appreciated by their leaders through verbal affirmation. They are also given responsibilities and challenges, which tells us a bit about the complexity of their positions.

5.3 Research question 3: How do the women experience their career opportunities in order to advance in their careers?

In the last section of the discussion, the key finding regarding research question 3 will be discussed. From the empirical findings, there were some interesting aspects regarding the opportunities and ambitions of the respondents. These findings will also be analysed and discussed using Joan Acker's theory on inequality regimes. Getting to know how the women themselves perceived their career opportunities and future career prospects might get an insight into some processes which may or may not stunt upward movement in the hierarchy of their organisations.

5.3.1 Perceived opportunities

In the empirical findings, it was presented that the respondents have a specific impression of their career opportunities, while for others it was more of an afterthought. According to Acker (2006), hierarchies have embedded racial and gender patterns which are reproduced by restricting opportunities. However, these patterns, or processes, are difficult to observe. An attempt at analysing the respondents perceived opportunities would be made in this section of the discussion.

According to Kanter (1993) and Pekkarinen and Vartiainen (2006), women and minorities are typically concentrated in low-tier jobs, with little complexity and lack of mobility. The higher threshold for these groups can have a negative effect on their aspirations

and hopes of future prospects in their companies. Overwhelmingly, however, most of the respondents stated that their current position could contribute to the furthering of their careers. There seems to be an impression of the opportunity of mobility (Kanter, 1993) in their line of work, as well as in their organisations. Interestingly, some of the respondents, such as R2 has reached a certain level in her career where she is close to a leadership level, and she can choose how far she will go in the hierarchy. While others, such as R1, brought up that she has the opportunity to become a leader as long as she further develops her competence. Generally, for all the women, they believe that they have the same opportunities as any other person in their organisations.

The experience of having opportunities, being able to move forward and upwards, may increase work- and career commitment, as well as aspiring for higher positions. Their positive outlook on their opportunities may become self-fulfilling prophecies regarding future ambitions (Kanter, 1993). As it comes off from the empirical data, for some of the women there already is an existing career path built-in within the hierarchy of their organisations. This may particularly be the reason for the experience of upward mobility among those respondents. As long as they wish for it, upward mobility seems to be a given. This organisation is where R5 and R7 works, and it is a large hierarchical organisation in the public sector. The previously mentioned women, R1 and R2, work for the same, yet different organisation which also has the same characteristics as the other. Under *control and compliance* Acker (2006) brings up the controlling aspect of bureaucratic structures. Regarding the four respondents that were mentioned earlier, one can question if the structures in their organisations, have an equalising effect have instead of creating larger inequalities. Due to the lack of relevant data on this, conclusions are reserved for future research on this subject. However, if this is the case then perhaps large and hierarchical organisations are doing something right when it comes to minority women and their career advancement.

5.3.2 The lack of leadership ambitions

Kobberstad (2020) found out that minorities with higher education end up lowering their ambitions when their future opportunities are not as expected. Thus, the assumption of the opposite must be true, if highly educated minorities have the opportunities as they expect, then their ambition levels probably will either be maintained or increased. Some of these ambitions might even be to reach a top management position. As has been mentioned earlier, these are highly educated women – six out of the eight have taken at least a master's degree.

They also have the impression that they have career opportunities as long as they choose to take advantage of them. However, most of these women do not have leadership ambitions.

R₁ and R₂ used to have ambitions about furthering their careers and get higher up in their organisation when they were younger. Both believe that they have the opportunity to get a management position. However, they both would tell that those ambitions are not with them anymore. Both contribute to the reason for this to their interest in the field of their profession rather than the management. This could be a situation where their ambitions have been downgraded due to prior experiences (Kobberstad, 2020). During the interview, R₁ recounted an experience she had when she was encouraged to apply for a team leader position at her former workplace. Despite having longer seniority, longer relevant work experience and responsibilities which would be beneficial for the new role, she lost the position to a new employee. She experienced that she was discriminated against due to her minority background. According to Acker (2006) HR-decisions like this reflect the inequalities in the practices of the organisation. As one is confronted with such a reality, the ambitions can become lower, and as Kanter (1993) stated that the commitment to the organisation could be negatively affected. This is exactly what happened, as she after a few years resigned and found her current position. This indicates that HR decision-making can have an impact on how minority women view the obtainability of leadership positions.

The other respondents do not see themselves in a leadership position either. The various reasonings are their passion for the field itself, the demanding nature that comes with such position, and just "going with the flow". This is rather surprising considering all the hard work these women have accomplished to get to the point they have reached today. All of the respondents are in a mid-tier or above positions and have the opportunity to obtain a higher position in the hierarchy, yet not even one of them have such plans or ambitions. These women work for large hierarchical organisations and the steepness of the hierarchy (Acker, 2006) might have an effect. Research by Zeng (2011) show that there are barriers in all levels of the organisations and not only at the top, Pompper (2011), however state that when ethnicity is applied then it only strengthens the barriers to the top of the hierarchy. This could indicate that after reaching their current level, and despite some being so close to the higher levels, they are relatively "stuck" in the middle of the hierarchy. The respondents, however, have a generally positive perception regarding opportunity of mobility. Perhaps the problem does not lie there, but at the "competence deficit". The women who moved to Norway as adults or teenagers have put in a lot effort in getting their higher education, learning the language and culture due to the "competence-deficit" they arrived with. Due to this deficit,

these women had to start their careers at a later time than their Norwegian counterparts. This indicates that they have not been able to develop their careers towards the level of leadership yet compared to their Norwegian peers. Perhaps in the years to come, 10 or 15 years into the future, their ambitions may be changed, since the lack of opportunities does not seem to be the problem here.

5.3.3 The chances of a female leader with a non-Western minority background

The chances of non-Western women becoming a leader seem not to be given for all of the respondents. In 2009, only 2,3 per cent of the top management in the municipalities, without specifying gender, were minorities (This-Evensen et al., 2009). Two out of the five organisations the respondents work for the presence of non-Western female colleagues seems to be felt, however none of these workplaces has a female leader of such background. The impression these women have is that in all levels of their organisations, only ethnic Norwegians are leaders, there are some men with minority background occupying such positions. There is little representation for the respondents, and it might have an impact on how the women perceive the chances of women, such as them reaching higher positions. Half of the women believe that becoming a leader is not a problem, while the other half does.

5.3.3.1 *Management is about capabilities*

According to Ellingsæter (2014), educational choices is one of the factors that sustain the glass ceiling. There is a lack of women who take management or leadership degrees. Social sciences and humanities studies dominate among both Norwegian and minority women (Bartsch et al., 2020). If one looks at table 3, one can see that five of the respondents also have degrees in these fields of study. On the other hand, there are two who have economics and administration degrees. The women who believe that women of non-Western background can become leaders confirm the findings of Ellingsæter (2014). They believe that if one has the right capabilities and competence, the right education, and work towards such a position, then one can make it happen and obtain that goal.

Two of the respondents who believe this are R₁ and R₂ who stated that they already are at the level where they could become leaders if they wanted to. They both also used to have ambitions of getting a higher position in the hierarchy. This perhaps indicates that these women belong to a *privileged* group. Acker (2006) states that the visibility of inequalities can be affected by a person's privilege by belonging to a dominant group. Brekke et al. (2020)

identified a "minority hierarchy" where people of minority background from Asia or Africa tend to experience more discrimination. However, this does not seem to apply well with the findings as three out of these women are from those said areas. As mentioned before, these women believe in their own capabilities and competence. Thus, it seems like this strong belief in themselves reflects how they view the attainability of leadership positions. This perhaps indicates that these women belong to a *privileged* group of minority women. Acker (2006) states that the visibility of inequalities can be affected by a person's privilege by belonging to a dominant group. One could say that these women are more on the same level as their Norwegian counterparts than other minority women, and this can lead to the perception that the possibility of a non-Western woman in a leadership position is achievable. There seems to be a strong belief in the system.

5.3.3.2 *Low chances of becoming a leader*

The rest of the women brought up the fact that it is not easy for non-Western women to become leaders. The factors which were brought up were related to the demands on the labour market, which has been analysed in 5.1. Halrynjo et al. (2015) state how professional focus, inner drive and commitment to leadership are important factors which lead to career development into becoming a leader. However, as R₃ stated it is not about the lack of opportunities, but moving to Norway as an adult leads to prior experiences and competence to get invalidated, and one has to start all over again. R₇ experiences that one needs to be Norwegian, or like Norwegians by knowing the language and have the same cultural understanding.

Acker (2006) states that HR-related decisions come from inequalities in organisational practices and processes. Through *homosocial reproduction*, leaders tend to fill positions of power with people similar to themselves (Elliott & Smith, 2004; Kanter, 1993). According to Pompper (2011), being ethnically different from the "white male" leader keeps minority women away from positions of power. As mentioned earlier, there are no female non-Western leaders recognised by the respondents in any of the organisations. Unfortunately, such practices maintain the imbalance of power in management positions. This can have an impact on how non-Western women perceive their chances of becoming leaders, and for them to apply for such positions at all. For the respondents, it seems like that the impression is that the opportunities are there, yet it is difficult to obtain as there are a lot of barriers in the way of it. The barriers seem to outweigh the possibilities, and as Halrynjo et al. (2015) states that

conditions in the organisations and at home need to be present for such ambitions to be realised. However, that does not seem to be enough, to be able to see more non-Western women in leadership positions, the conditions on the labour market need to be present as well. The strong demand for Norwegian-specific capital (Thorshaug & Valenta, 2012) seems to act as a structural barrier at this level. This can make the threshold of applying for leadership positions higher.

5.3.4 Summary of research question 3: How do the women experience their career opportunities in order to advance in their careers?

To summarise these findings, the women perceive their career opportunities to be on equal footing as anyone else. There is seems to be an opportunity for mobility in their organisations. Despite having higher education, there is a lack of leadership ambition among the respondents. However, half of the women believe that non-Western women can become leaders as long as one has the right competence and strive for such a position. The other half of the women, on the other hand, do not have the same positive impression.

6. Conclusion

In this thesis, I have conducted an analysis and discussed how women with non-Western minority background have successfully developed their careers. The main focus has been on the personal experiences of the respondents. I have looked at various theoretical mechanisms to examine what the respondents themselves believe are the success factors contributing to their career development. This has been done by shedding light on the three research questions: “How do highly educated women with minority background experience the labour market and recruitment processes?”, “How do highly educated women with minority background experience their current working situation?”, and “How do the women experience their career opportunities in order to advance in their careers?”

The thesis statement that is chosen for this thesis is complex, and the findings show that there are various conditions which have contributed to career development in a relevant field. Individual, cultural and structural barriers are explanations given on why minority women struggle in the labour market (IMDi, 2007). These barriers come in the form of lack of education, language- and communication skills, and social network, lack of cultural understanding, and structural barriers such as discrimination and approval of education from abroad. However, throughout the analysis, I have discussed what the individual factors that have contributed to their career development, as well as looked at factors where the organisations may have contributed. Like Becker (1994), the respondents view their human capital to be the most important asset as human capital holders. The women have been and are aware of the demands on the labour market, in particular the demand for Norwegian-specific capital, and they have actively worked towards being an "attractive job seeker". All of the women have taken at least parts of their education in Norway. Interestingly, early on, it came forth that the women view education as a tool to move forward on the labour market. Relevant education is seen to be a necessity to be able to build a career. Language and communication skills are other factors which were important for the women. It was especially important to signal to recruiters that they can fit into the culture and the workplace. Social capital (Putnam, 2000) has also played a big role for these women. Their upbringing and family relationships indicate that being taught certain values and norms, and having good role models in their parents have had a large impact on them as people and as career holders. Much in agreement of the theory, for half of the respondents, social network has contributed to alternative access into a relevant field (Granovetter, 1973).

According to Acker (2006), organisations have processes and practices that maintain gender and ethnic differences in positions of power. Regarding the findings, as far as they are in their careers, it does not seem that the gender and ethnicity of the respondents have an effect on how they experience conditions at the workplace. These are very skilled women who are seen by their leaders, and their competence is appreciated. They have a lot of responsibilities on their shoulders, and there does not seem to be any lack of challenges either. Their confidence in themselves and their competence shines through. Despite this, the social relations at work seem to be affected due to the difference in social- and cultural codes, much in agreement of Rogstad (2001)'s findings. The women do not seem to be lacking any opportunities for career advancement, and upward mobility in the organisation seems to be a given for some. In organisations such as, O4, there seems to be a system for upward mobility, such as already existing career ladders. However, despite having higher education, getting far in their careers and the seemingly abundance of opportunities, the women do not have leadership ambitions. All of them express that they are more interested in the professional field itself, rather than the leadership perspective. Research on the glass ceiling (Pompper, 2011) and Acker's theory indicated that being ethnically different from the "white male" imagery prevents minority women from accessing leadership positions. Interestingly, there is a divide among the women themselves regarding the attainability of non-Western women becoming a leader. For those that believe that it is possible, believe that the right education and competence will allow it. While for the others, the demand for Norwegian-specific capital seems to be perceived as a barrier.

In the analysis and discussion, I have attempted to give a better understanding of the experiences and the success factors which have benefitted the career development of non-Western minority women. The findings clearly show that investing in human capital factors such as education, language skills, and cultural- and social understanding are very important for developing a career in a relevant field. The same applies to social capital, such as social network and family. Looking at the conditions at the workplace the findings indicate that the "value" of gender and ethnicity is not of significance at their level, and they are valued based on their competence and capabilities. They do not experience that their ethnicity act as a barrier for career opportunities and career advancement. The interconnecting factors which have led to their career development is presented in the figure below.

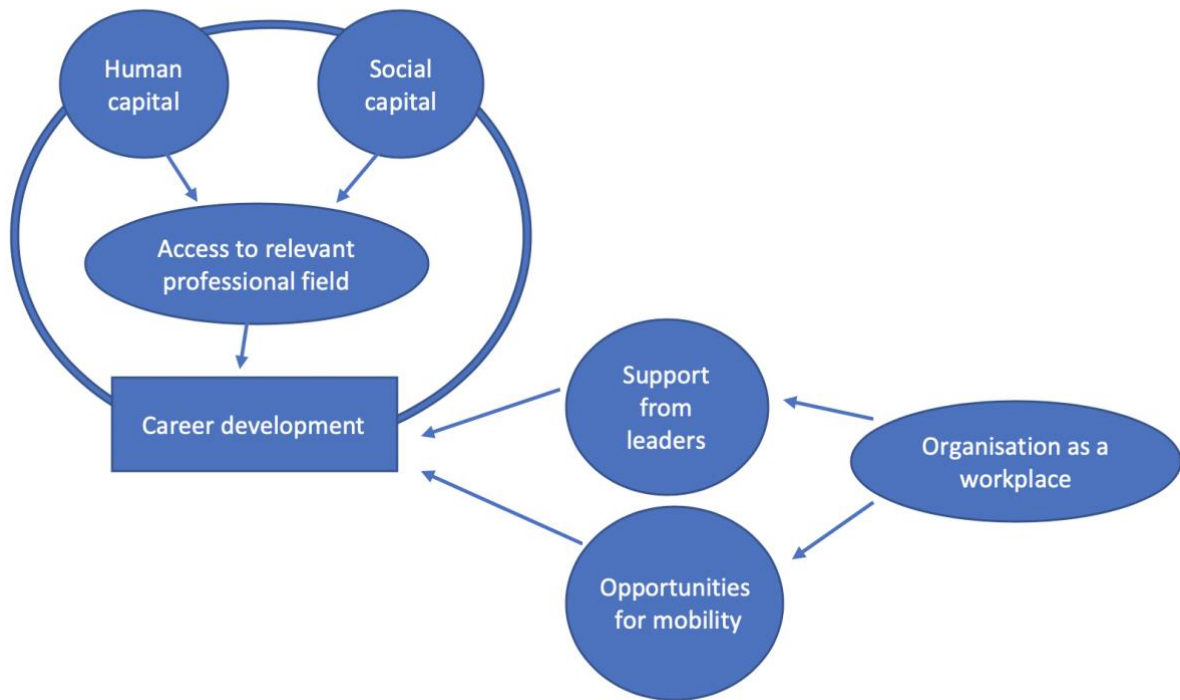


Figure 2: The interconnecting factors that has led to career development

6.1 Limitations and future research

For this thesis, only eight non-Western women have been interviewed. They all have higher education and are in mid-tier or above position in their respective organisations. Due to the purposive sampling approach, there will be a selection bias present. There is little research on non-Western minority women who have successfully made a career for themselves. Thus, the conclusions in this thesis such as the impact upbringing has on their career, and the experience of gender and ethnicity not having any significance at the workplace, can be strengthened through future research. Although the variation in the experiences was of interest, another limitation is the heterogeneous aspect of the group *non-Western*, as it is difficult to come forth with generalisable conclusions.

It would be interesting for future research to look at the context of the women's situations. From the analysis, it is clear that the women experience opportunities for mobility and opportunities to further develop their careers. All of the women belong to large hierarchical organisations, and from this small sample, it seems that the type of organisation actually can have an impact on the development and advancement of their career. That is why it would be interesting to look at the organisational context. As mentioned in the analysis, the two of the women, who work for the same organisation (O₂), have expressed that they can

become leaders if they wish to. There also are two other women who work for the same organisation (O4), who could tell that their organisations have already established career paths. Both of these organisations are large hierarchical organisations, and perhaps the bureaucratic aspect is doing well in relation to minority women and their career opportunities. As with such research projects, there are constraints that limit the degree of utilisation of the thesis, such as time constraints. However, another constraint that uniquely affect this thesis was that it was difficult to find respondents that had the attributes needed – such as a woman with a non-Western minority background, has higher education, and has successfully develop at career in a relevant field. If these constraints were not there, I would have looked at a bigger sample size of respondents from a bigger variation of organisations. This to investigate if the structures of certain organisations can positively impact their career advancement to the top of the hierarchy.

Based on the findings, it was interesting to find that the women were surprisingly satisfied in their organisations, and they experienced no differential treatment or discrimination in their current workplace. It would be interesting to also look at the informal social interactions at the workplace. From the empirical data, it comes forth that the women are highly confident in themselves, and one can question if they reach a certain level in the hierarchy then perhaps gender and ethnicity does not matter. It might be that the confidence these women have in themselves reflects how others around them view them as well. To investigate these informal social interactions, it would be interesting to interview women with non-Western background, their leaders and colleagues, as well as their family and friends.

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8. Appendix

8.1 Interview guide

Interview guide in Norwegian

Generelle spørsmål:

1. Hvor gammel er du?
2. Hvilken utdanning har du?
3. Kan du fortelle meg hvilken etnisk bakgrunn du har?
4. Er du født i Norge? Hvis ikke, hvor lenge har du bodd i Norge? Eventuelt, tok du utdanning i hjemlandet eller i Norge?
5. Hvor lenge har du jobbet i [org.]?
6. Hva er din nåværende stilling?

Her ønsker jeg å stille deg noen spørsmål om hvordan du opplever arbeidsmarkedet som arbeidssøker.

1. Hva var din første jobb etter endt utdanning?
2. Har karriereløpet ditt vært et bestemt valg?
3. Hvordan opplever du arbeidsmarkedet som en person med ikke-vestlig minoritetsbakgrunn?
4. Opplever du at det betyr noe at du er en kvinne med ikke-vestlig minoritetsbakgrunn når du søker på jobb?
5. Opplever du at din minoritetsbakgrunn kan være en hinder eller en fordel?
6. Hvordan ville du beskrevet det norske arbeidsmarkedet som en kvinne med ikke-vestlig minoritetsbakgrunn?

I denne delen ønsker jeg å stille deg spørsmål som handler om hvordan du opplever arbeidssituasjonen din i [org.].

1. Fortell meg litt om den stillingen du har nå.
2. Hva er viktigst for deg for at du skal kunne lykkes i [org.]?
3. Opplever du at du har fått tilstrekkelig med utfordringer og ansvar av dine ledere?
4. Opplever du at din bakgrunn som ikke-vestlig kvinne påvirker karrieren din?
5. Opplever du at personer med ikke-vestlig innvandrerbakgrunn blir behandlet på en annen måte enn de som er «etnisk norsk» på jobb?
6. Hva vet du om mangfoldspolitikken i [org.]?
7. I hvilken grad opplever du at i [org.] har et inkluderende arbeidsmiljø?
8. Opplever du at kvinner med ikke-vestlig minoritetsbakgrunn er synlig i [org.]?

I denne delen ønsker jeg å spørre deg om dine forventninger og karrieremuligheter for fremtiden din i [org.].

1. Hvilken fremtid ser du for deg i [org.]?
2. Har du ønske om å bli leder i fremtiden? Hvorfor/Hvorfor ikke?
3. Føler du at dine ledere har tillit til deg og dine ferdigheter?

4. Har du eller har du fått muligheten til å lede andre?
5. Opplever du at du blir satset på av din leder?
6. Opplever du at den stillingen du har i dag kan bidra til videre karriere og eventuelt en lederstilling?
7. Har du blitt oppmuntret til å søke på lederstillinger?
8. Opplever du at kvinner med innvandrerbakgrunn har like muligheter til karriereutvikling og til å tiltre i lederstillinger?

Etterfølgende spørsmål:

- Opplever du at familien din (mor/far, søsken, barn osv) har hatt en innvirkning på valget ditt av utdanning og/eller karrierevalget ditt?
- Er det noe i oppveksten din som du mener har vært viktig for at du har kommet dit du er idag på din karrierevei?
- Forskning viser at 61% av minoritetskvinner er i arbeid. Opplever du at dette kommer til uttrykk på arbeidsplassen din?

Interview guide in English

General questions:

1. How old are you?
2. What education do you have?
3. Can you tell me what ethnic background you have?
4. Are you born in Norway? If not, how long have you been living in Norway? Possibly, did you take education in your home country or in Norway?
5. How long have you been working in [org.]?
6. What is your current position?

Here I would like to ask you some questions about how you experience the labour market as a job seeker.

1. What was your first job after graduation?
2. How have you experienced the Norwegian job market as a person with non-Western minority background?
3. Do you feel that it means something you are a woman with a non-Western minority background when applying for a job?
4. Have you experienced any challenges when you were a job seeker?
5. Do you feel that your ethnic background can be an advantage or an obstacle when applying?

In this section, I want to ask you questions about how you experience your work situation in [org.].

1. What is the most important for you to succeed at in the workplace?
2. Do you feel that you are receiving sufficient challenges and responsibilities from your leaders?
3. Has the course of your career been a determined choice?
4. From your experiences do you think that your background as a non-western woman has affected your career in any way?
5. Do you experience that women with non-Western immigrant background are treated differently than people who are “ethnic Norwegian” at work?
6. What do you know about [org.]’s diversity policies?
7. To what extent do you feel that [org.] has an inclusive work environment?
8. Do you feel that women with non-Western minority background are visible at [org.]?

In this section, I want to ask you about your expectations and career opportunities for your future at [org.].

1. What future do you see for yourself at [org.]?
2. Do you want to be a leader in the future? Why / Why not?
3. Do you feel that your leaders have confidence in you and your skills?
4. Have you been given the opportunity to lead others?
5. Do you feel that you are being invested in by your leader?

6. Do you feel that the position you have today can contribute to furthering your career and possibly contribute to a management position?
7. Have you been encouraged to apply for management positions?
8. Do you feel that women with a non-Western immigrant background have equal opportunities for career development and to enter management positions?

Final comments.

Do you have anything to add?

Do you have any comments on the interview and interview situation?

Follow-up questions:

- Do you feel that your family (mother/father, siblings, children and so on) has affected your choice of education og your career path in any way?
- Is there something in your upbringing that you feel has been important for you to get where you are today in your career?
- Reseach shows that 61% of minority women in Norway are in the workforce, do you feel that this is reflected in your workplace?

8.2 Notification form from NSD



NSD sin vurdering

Prosjekttittel

Minoritetskvinner og deres karrieremuligheter

Referansenummer

387236

Registrert

17.01.2020 av Suzan Cifci - suzanci@stud.ntnu.no

Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon

Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet / Fakultet for økonomi (ØK) / NTNU Handelshøyskolen

Prosjektansvarlig (vitenskapelig ansatt/veileder eller stipendiat)

Synnøve Hitland, synnove.hitland@ntnu.no, tlf: 73559981

Type prosjekt

Studentprosjekt, masterstudium

Kontaktinformasjon, student

Suzan Cifci, suzan.cifci92@gmail.com, tlf: 92256875

Prosjektperiode

01.01.2020 - 01.10.2020

Status

14.02.2020 - Vurdert

Vurdering (2)

14.02.2020 - Vurdert

NSD har vurdert endringen registrert 14.2.2020.

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 med vedlegg den 14.2.2020. Behandlingen kan fortsette.

Endringen innebærer en utsettelse av dato for prosjektslutt fra 31.5.2020 til 1.10.2020. Utvalget vil informeres om ny dato for prosjektslutt.

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: Lisa Lie Bjordal

Tlf. Personverntjenester: 55 58 21 17 (tast 1)

05.02.2020 - 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 den 5.2.2020 med vedlegg, samt i meldingsdialogen mellom innmelder og NSD. Behandlingen kan starte.

NSD legger til grunn at rekrutteringen gjennomføres på en måte som er etisk forsvarlig og som ikke bryter med taushetsplikten. NSD anbefaler at rekruttering gjøres ved at de som er interesserte i å delta selv tar kontakt med forsker, slik at forsker ikke får ut kontaktinformasjon til andre enn disse.

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 særlige kategorier av personopplysninger om etnisk opprinnelse og alminnelige kategorier av personopplysninger frem til 31.5.2020.

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 nr. 11 og art. 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 uttrykkelige samtykke, jf. personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a, jf. art. 9 nr. 2 bokstav a, jf. personopplysningsloven § 10, jf. § 9 (2).

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: Lisa Lie Bjordal
Tlf. Personverntjenester: 55 58 21 17 (tast 1)

8.3 Consent form for the respondents

Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet «Kvinner med ikke-vestlig minoritetsbakgrunn og deres karrierevei»?

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å undersøke hvordan kvinner med ikke-vestlig minoritetsbakgrunn opplever sin karrierevei og deres muligheter til å bli ledere. I dette skrivet gir jeg deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

Formål

Formålet med prosjektet er å undersøke hvilke opplevelser kvinner med ikke-vestlig minoritetsbakgrunn har angående egen arbeidssituasjon og karrieremuligheter, samt undersøke ledelsens perspektiv eller oppfatning av situasjonen.

Forskningsspørsmål som skal undersøkes er:

1. Hvordan opplever kvinner med ikke-vestlig minoritetsbakgrunn arbeidsmarkedet og rekrutteringsprosessen?
2. Hvordan opplever kvinner med ikke-vestlig minoritetsbakgrunn sin arbeidssituasjon?
3. Hvilke forventninger og karrieremuligheter har kvinner med ikke-vestlig minoritetsbakgrunn for å komme seg videre i karrieren?

Opplysningene som innhentes, skal ikke brukes til andre formål enn for å belyse forskningsspørsmålene, og eventuelt til å publisere funnene i en vitenskapelig artikkel i ettertid.

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?

Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet Handelshøyskolen, fakultetet for økonomi er ansvarlig for prosjektet

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?

Kriterier for å bli forespurt om å delta er: kvinne med ikke-vestlig minoritetsbakgrunn, og med høyere utdanning. Omtrent 12-15 personer får denne henvendelsen. Noen informanter er blitt plukket ut etter henvendelse til arbeidsplass, og andre ved bruk av snøballmetoden

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?

Hvis du velger å delta i prosjektet, innebærer det at det gjennomføres et intervju med deg. Det vil ta deg ca. 1 time. Intervjuet inneholder spørsmål om din arbeidssituasjon, om dine opplevelser av jobbsøking og arbeidsmarkedet, og om dine fremtidige karriereplaner. Jeg tar lydopptak og notater fra intervjuet, og personlig informasjon som kan identifisere deg blir anonymisert under transkribering av intervjuet. Etter endt transkribering vil alle lydopptak slettes.

Det er frivillig å delta

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. 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.

Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger

Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

- Det er jeg (studenten som skal skrive masteroppgaven) og veileder, Synnøve Hitland, som har tilgang til opplysningene dine ved NTNU Handelshøyskolen.
- For å sikre at ingen uvedkommende får tilgang til personopplysningene skal;
 - navnet og kontaktopplysningene dine erstattes med kode og anonymiseres
 - dine opplysninger blir forsendt og lagret på NTNU sin krypterte server (VPN)

Du og din identitet vil ikke kunne gjenkjennes i oppgaven. Opplysninger om minoritetsbakgrunn vil publiseres, på generelt grunnlag, og uten noen tilknytning til deg som deltaker. Eksempelvis vil det stå «Alle respondenter er av ikke-vestlig minoritetsbakgrunn fra Afrika, Midtøsten og Asia.»

Hva skjer med opplysningene dine når vi avslutter forskningsprosjektet?

Prosjektet skal etter planen avsluttes i oktober 2020. Ved prosjektslutt skal personopplysninger og lydopptak slettes.

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 Handelshøyskolen 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:

- NTNU Handelshøyskolen ved:
 - Veileder – Synnøve Hitland, på epost (synnove.hitland@ntnu.no) eller telefon: 73559981
 - Student – Suzan Cifci, på epost (suzanci@stud.ntnu.no) eller telefon: 92256875
- Vårt personvernombud: Thomas Helgesen
- NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS, på epost (personverntjenester@nsd.no) eller telefon: 55 58 21 17.

Med vennlig hilsen

Prosjektansvarlig
Synnøve Hitland

Masterstudent
Suzan Cifci

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet «*Kvinner med ikke-vestlig minoritetsbakgrunn og deres karrierevei*», og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

- å delta i intervju

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet, ca. oktober 2020

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

