MSc in Human resource management and organizational psychology

Job Satisfaction and Perceived Equality within Icelandic Organizations

January 2018
Name of student: Ásrún Á. Jónsdóttir
ID number: 091286-3439
Supervisor: Katrín Ólafsdóttir
Declaration of Research Work Integrity

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature of any degree. This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

By signing the present document I confirm and agree that I have read RU’s ethics code of conduct and fully understand the consequences of violating these rules in regards of my thesis.

05.01.18, Reykjavík 091286-3439

Date and place ID number Signature
Abstract

The main aim of this thesis was to investigate the relationship between job satisfaction, perceived equality and managerial responsibility in the International CRANET survey. In addition, the aim was to explore differences in job satisfaction and perceived equality and whether equality policy affects employees’ job satisfaction. Participants in the study were 1041 employees within organizations that participated in a two-sided study carried out on HRM managers of Icelandic companies with 70 or more employees. The data used in this thesis was the second part of the study, executed with employees of 35 organizations in agreement which the HRM managements. The results revealed no gender difference in job satisfaction, but gender difference in perceived equality. The results also showed that there is a relationship between perceived equality and job satisfaction and that managerial responsibility can affect perceived equality as well. Overall, gender, managerial responsibility and job satisfaction influenced perceived equality.

Keywords: Job satisfaction, Perceived Equality, Gender differences, Managerial Responsibility, employee perception, Human Resource Management, Gender Policy.
Úrdráttur


Efnisorð: Starfsánægja, Skynjun á jafnrétti, Kynjamunur, Stjórnunarleg ábyrgð, skynjun starfsmanna, Mannauðsstjórnun, jafnréttisstefna.
Prologue
This thesis is submitted as a requirement of my MSc degree in Human Resource Management and Organizational Psychology from Reykjavík University. This thesis addresses the possible relationship between job satisfaction and perceived equality, along with gender difference within these subjects. This thesis was conducted under the support and supervision of Katrín Ólafsdóttir and I thank her for assisting me with much insight and valuable pointers throughout this process. I would also like to thank my friends for support through working on this thesis, specially Edda Ósk my mental support, my parents for unbelievable help both in regards of revising and motivating and with helping me with my son when I needed time to work on the thesis. And finally, I want to thank my son Gabríel Dominic for being my motivation in life, without all these individuals I could not have done this.
Table of contents

Declaration of Research Work Integrity .......................................................... 2
Abstract ............................................................................................................... 3
Úrdráttur .............................................................................................................. 4
Preface .................................................................................................................. 5
List of tables & Figures ....................................................................................... 7
  1. Introduction ................................................................................................... 8
    1.1. Gender Equality in Iceland ................................................................. 9
  2. Theoretical Framework .............................................................................. 10
    2.1. Gender Equality and Key concepts ................................................. 10
    2.2. Equality policies ................................................................................. 12
    2.3. HRM maturity in Iceland .................................................................... 16
    2.4. Job Satisfaction .................................................................................... 17
    2.5. Gender Differences in Job satisfaction ............................................ 21
  3. Research questions ..................................................................................... 25
  4. Methodology ............................................................................................... 25
    4.1. Participants & procedure .................................................................... 25
    4.2. Measures .............................................................................................. 26
      4.2.2. Data analysis ............................................................................... 26
  5. Results ......................................................................................................... 27
  6. Discussion ................................................................................................... 29
    6.1. Conclusion and recommendations ................................................... 35
    6.2. Limitations & strengths ....................................................................... 35
References .......................................................................................................... 35
Appendix A ........................................................................................................ 40
List of tables & figures

Table 1............................................................................................................27
Table 2.............................................................................................................28
Table 3.............................................................................................................29
Table 4.............................................................................................................29
1. Introduction

People are different in many ways, age, race, disability, religion, marital status, gender and so on. To make sure different people get the same opportunities in the job market, organizations in Iceland are required to have an equality policy, but they are not required to uphold this policy by any certain type of implementation. Companies can get an equal wage certification, and from January 2018, they are required by law in Iceland. Diversity in the labor market is a reality, but the most common and oldest issue when it comes to diversity is gender inequality (Shen, Chanda, D’Netto & Monga, 2009). Considerable evidence exists that women come across more barriers in their careers in the form of bias, hostility and discrimination (Ng& Burke, 2004), the group at the most disadvantage being women in a racial minority group. However female workforce participation has been rising strikingly over the last decades without them gaining the equality when it comes to factors like wages, making wage equality one of the remaining factors of gender equality (Furnham & Wilson, 2011). According to Moore & Parkhouse (2000), a valuable solution to gender equality in organizations is support form top management, which could lead to development and stronger representation of female managers.

In the last decades, there has been a shift in the industrialized countries, making characteristics that were before seen as male traits (physical strength, competitiveness, stamina, independence, assertiveness, self-reliance and power) less likely to increase success in the labor market (Furnham et al., 2011). Skills like interpersonal expressiveness and social skills have increased in value. Along with these skills, focus on gender equality has changed the gender roles in the workforce, shifting some “male-dominated” professions to a more equal setting, getting more women involved in law, psychology and medicine. Gender equality commitments have increased the number of women not only entering in these fields, but also remaining (Furnham et al., 2011).

In February 2008, law on equal rights of the genders were placed in Iceland in Iceland about equal rights between the genders. The aim of these laws was to set in place and uphold gender equality and equal opportunities in all areas of society (Althingi, 2017). All individuals shall have the same opportunities to develop their talents despite gender. In these laws, it is stated that employers and unions shall systematically work at gender equality in the job market. Employers shall work to make
sure there is gender equality within each organization along with making sure certain jobs are unequal when it comes to gender, making them male and female occupations. It also says that special emphasis should be put on gender equality in managerial and high level positions. These laws also state that each company with over 25 employees shall have an equality policy in place or equality goals in the company’s policy. From January 2018, new laws will be put in place in Iceland that will make it obligatory for all organizations with 25 employees and more to get an equal wages certification, which until now has been a choice for companies but not mandatory (http://www.jafnretti.is/jafnretti/?D10cID=ReadNews3&ID=1401&Cl=0).

According to Statistic Iceland (2017) 25.9% of directors of companies in Iceland are women, which is similar to the United States of America (USA) where the number is 24.7% (Catalyst, 2017) making women very much a minority group when it comes to upper management both in Iceland and the USA.

1.1. Gender equality in Iceland

The gender wage gap has been researched from many different perspectives. Historians, economists, lawyers and psychologists have examined the wage gap between the genders in different cultures and time periods, focusing on different factors like lack of training, gender segregated fields, job characteristics, family status, organizational structure, intrapersonal factors that influence salary decision-making and economic and social forces (Furnham et al., 2011). This wage gap is still there despite initiatives and policies (Ramamoorthy & Stringer, 2017).

A newly published research paper on gender equality within the University of Iceland (Kynjafjarðarinnan Háskóla Íslands, 2017) stated that between the years 2010 and 2015, the wage gap decreased within the University. However, there still is a gap, and according to the paper it it results from a faulty administration system To clarify, the wage gap difference lies within the assessment of work and the promotion system, making it easier for men to be promoted, which results in higher wages for men than women. There has been improvement since 2010 when it comes to changes in gender politics within the university. Boards within were made more gender balanced, which affected the promotion system in a positive way. However, when a new promotion system was designed, factors that affect gender equality were not considered as highly as needed. Things like gendered culture within the academic world, age, gendered structure of departments, gender balance in academic tasks and the different social roles
of the genders. The authors of the paper feel that too much emphasis on transparency and efficiency can make administration of the school look past the prominence of equality goals.

The promotional system today in the University of Iceland seems to have a glass ceiling that needs to be eliminated to increase gender equality. Some of the ideas they made for improvement are for example educational, administrative, promotional, and managerial, with regards to wages, informational analyzing, emphasis on a work-family policy and more. The equality policy at the University, when it comes to gender equality, is built on gender mainstreaming, which will be explained in details later in this thesis.

2. Theoretical Framework
Both concepts of job satisfaction and gender equality will be discussed in this thesis. Both concepts are long standing and have been studied back and forth for a long time. Studies and key concepts will be covered in the next chapters in relation to the research questions that will follow.

2.1. Gender Equality and key concepts
The meaning of gender equality is that women and men are allowed the same opportunities, in the workplace, in the community, in politics and in life in general. Gender equality policies, whether it is within an organization or within the European Union (EU), are intended to cut down any barriers that stand before women, so they can participate to achieve the same goals or status as men. Whether it is a glass ceiling effect or a glass escalator, workplace equality has been something organizations have been trying to rectify for decades. Some organizations do their very best to implement their gender equality policy, others not so much.

Gender equality is a basic right in all parts in life, however women are still not equal to men in the labour market and this issue is still an important factor in the Europe 2020 strategy (European Comission, 2010b). There are various programs and projects all over Europe that are actively endorsing gender equality at the work place. In a report on equality between women and men (Tominc, Šebjan & Širec, 2017) six areas are mentioned that needs to be focused on: Equal economic independence for both genders, equality in decision making, equal wages for equal value, dignity & integrity, no gender-based violence, promotion of gender equality outside the EU and issues like gender roles. Data shows that women are underrepresented in decision-making
positions, in both politics and the business market and only count for less than a quarter of company board members. Research has shown that the influence of female managers on the wage gap is in a positive direction, meaning that in organizations where more women are at senior levels, they will negotiate for salaries in a way that decreases the gender wage gap (Furnham et al., 2011). Although some research has implied that when organizations have more women employees and managers, the overall wages for both genders decreases, but the gender gap in the wages also decreases. More male employees and managers might mean women receive higher salary than when working for the organization with more women managers. However, with higher salaries comes a greater wage gap, making the gender cause increase in wage differences and decrease in job promotion (Furnham et al., 2011).

The glass ceiling effect is a term which represents the gender inequality in the labour market (Baxter & Wright, 2000) in a form of an invisible barrier that stands in the way of women wanting to climb the managerial hierarchy, keeping the upper levels of leadership primarily a male domain (Bruckmüller, Ryan, Rink & Haslam, 2014). It represents the underlying inequality that lets women enter the managerial side of companies without the same chances to promote as men in the same positions. Underneath the glass ceiling, women can receive promotions, but then where men will keep on climbing, women would come to a complete stop, simply because of their gender. This results in fewer women in top managerial positions along with the fact that not only is there inequality at all stages of the hierarchy, but as women move higher, the obstacles increase even more, even though this could in some cases also be the case for men. The glass ceiling effect means that these obstacles as more intense for women than men. The reasons behind this discrimination can be multiple but it could simply be because of sexism or sexist attitudes. However, it is difficult to investigate this phenomenon in a statistical way.

A study carried out in Slovenia, with male and female managers, showed that perceived gender equality was significantly different by male and female managers, showing that the female managers perceived the gender equality to be lower than the male managers. The study revealed a positive relationship between perceived gender equality and perceived job satisfaction aiming both genders, although the difference between the genders was significant. The effect of perceived gender equality was a motivator for perceived job satisfaction for both genders, while being higher for women than men (Kalokerinos, Leuven, Kjelsaas, Bennetts & Hippel, 2017). There are
examples of organizations using gender policies to make their company a more desirable workplace. A global engineering company, in association with Lundkvist (2015), launched a process aiming to focus on a gender perspective for attractive work, which was in fact successful in the organization gaining knowledge about gender and becoming more of an attractive employer. After this teamwork, Lundkvist (2015) researched the presumption that a more gender equal workplace would be perceived as more attractive to both genders, he researched gender equality and employer branding together. This makes sense since being gender equal has widely been seen as positive for organizations (Lundkvist, 2015).

2.2. Equality policies
The concept of the glass cliff refers to when a woman is put in charge of an organization or place on a company board after a rough time, making it seem like the reason for the organizations rough patch is because the woman was put in charge. This puts an invisible cliff as a barrier for the woman without her knowledge, making it harder for her to lead the organization in the best way possible (Bruckmüller et al., 2014). Women who break through the glass ceiling are often put in a situation where there is a higher risk of failure, meaning it is more likely for a woman to be appointed to board positions when a company is in a state of crisis, while when a man would be appointed to the same position when everything within the organization was going smoothly. This has been studied, but with inconclusive results, which could depend on how data is analysed. The reasons behind a concept like the class cliff could be many. Ryan, Haslman & Postmes (2007) received multiple answers from 164 participants which covered factors both benign factors stating that women are more prepared to handle difficult situations and more malignant factors that women are more disposable in the workplace. There was also a gender difference in reaction to the class cliff concept, while women were recognising it with its risk and injustice and men were more likely to question the validity of the research. Women were also more likely to explain this with malignant practises like sexism, but men were more likely to explain it with benign factors like women’s fittingness for a difficult task or company factors unrelated to gender. When going deeper into the research Ryan, Haslman & Postmes (2007) found that gender stereotyping was a recurrent theme as an explanation for the glass cliff, seeing women being more capable in crises, possessing the soft skills and being good at
smoothing things over. Gender stereotyping portrait women as kind, empathic and compliant but men are assertive, self-confident and independent.

Another point in the discussion about the glass cliff is that when an organization is in trouble, change is often the solution too many, and since most companies have male leaders, women would be a change that could help the company. However, Ellemers, Rink, Derks and Ryan (2012) have concluded that the glass cliff is connected to the way the women themselves, put in the leadership role, handle it. Stating that the glass cliff concept is fuelled by gendered stereotypes of leadership and bias against women in leadership positions, but if the woman lets views of her affect her and how she copes with the bias she is more likely to fail. The authors go on explaining the reason for the glass cliff being that the women put in difficult leadership roles are in part at fault for appearing more feminine, standing independently without support or in a crisis, making them more suitable to handle a crisis and therefore end up in a glass cliff situation.

Gender mainstreaming is a method or a strategy for change, going past women’s policy machinery, using a semantics of effectiveness and public government to try to make gender equality an essential goal in all policies, it involves a mainstreaming of gender perspective in all facets of development (Woodward, A., 2003; Waal, 2006; Lombardo & Meier, 2006; Daly, 2005; Callerstig, 2014). It aims to empower the state to provide gender sensitive policies, so the only policies demanding equal rights would not only be the gender equality policies and to beyond increasing the numbers of women in development projects. There are differences in opinions about the effectiveness, quality and even definition of mainstreaming, going between labels like a tool, strategy, process or method, resulting in projects representing the wrong things being labelled as gender mainstreaming project. When its definition is not simply equal opportunity, but a deliberate and organised tactic to assimilate a gender perspective into analysis, procedure and policies and to ultimately attain gender equality by changing the mainstream (Woodward, 2003).

Gender mainstreaming defies the idea of the fixed nature of gender arrangements or regimes of society or an organization, referring to the generally formed forms of gender relations in any assumed setting. It assumes that the gender order already in place in society can be changed with intensive interventions, making the focus of the project to change the norms and values of genders and the inequality it follows. Gender mainstreaming questioned all policies and introduced new directions.
However, if projects or policies are not fully backed up by those implementing them, they cannot fully work as intended to (Stratigaki, 2005). After it was introduced, some countries still have older gender policies in the lead, even creating a mix of policies masquerading under the label gender mainstreaming (Daly, 2005). After gender mainstreaming was introduced, the number of women in public institutions has increased, and national governance and women’s labour participation has also increased (Rao & Kelleher, 2005). However, there are challenges to the gender policy adoption in Europe because of the different gender regimes in different countries (Ahrens & Callerstig, 2017).

There were some different approaches to gender mainstreaming throughout the years, shedding some light on that policies take time and need to be executed in a correct manner (Waal, 2006). Women in Development (WID) focused on women being a part of the development process and practice of equality policies. However, the Gender and Development (GAD) approach focused on challenging gender roles and relations and focused on the socially constructed basis of differences between the genders. The equity approach focused on women’s strategic gender needs, although the efficiency approach connected women’s labour, to make development more efficient (Waal, 2006). The empowerment approach focused on strategic desires as recognised by women whereas the integration approach focused on creating gender awareness and capability into mainstream development. In the overall sense of gender mainstreaming, the theme of the policy was to convert the development plan while prioritising women’s concern, failing to realize that the gender issues were identified within the existing development strategies. So the overall development agenda was not transformed, but each issue would acclimate to considering women as well as gender concerns (Waal, 2006). The European Council describes gender mainstreaming as the systematic incorporation of the respective situations, priorities and needs of both genders into every single policy to endorse equality between the genders and organising all policies and measures specifically to achieve equality by considering in the planning stage the respective situation of women and men in implementing and monitoring (Waal, 2006).

Gender parity means that the same amount of men and women benefit or participate in a project (Waal, 2006). Gender equality however means that men and women should have the same ability to do anything in life. There are barriers that eliminate women from the “competition”, cutting them out of “the race” altogether. If barriers that stand in front of women in certain aspects in life would be eliminated, they
could do the same and succeed to the same level as men, even resulting in them “winning the race” they were always excluded from. Equality does not, however, expect women to win the race, but want women to get the chance to compete with men on a level playing field. Gender Equality therefore means that both genders get equal opportunities equal resources, equal rewards, and equal chance of influence and contribution to development.

Gender equity on the other hand means that men and women should get the same outcome, meaning that women might have some subordinations and need increased capacity to change this, needing empowerment to transform gender power relations. Implicating that they expect different treatment of men and women so the results will be the same for both (Waal, 2006).

Baldwin, Butler and Johnson (2001) tested a model called the hierarchical theory model that connects wage discrimination to occupational segregation for organizations. They stated that discrimination against women isn’t so much about men not wanting to work with women, but is more about the hierarchical positions of men and women in the labour market, implying that men are more reluctant to work for women than with women. They then go on saying that since women do not have as much ground in the higher managerial hierarchy because of things like the glass ceiling, which creates an occupational segregation, it therefore ends in a wage discrimination. Per Baldwin et al., (2001), the reason for the hierarchical positions of the genders goes back to old-fashioned sexism and out dated traditional gender roles as far as before 1950, where married women did not work but were housewives while their husbands went to work to support them. If a married woman had a job, it was a sign of her husband’s inability to support his family. Then the organizational structure had the assumption that women would not become managers because they would not be working at the organizations long enough.

A study carried out in the UK on wage differences between the genders, showed that out of 294 participants, male participants earned more than females in half of the occupations, in both male and female-dominated fields (Furnham et al., 2011). An empirical analysis carried out by Blau & Devaro (2007) on promotion rates, stated that promotion rates and the wage changes associated with these promotions were higher for males than females.

The conceptualizing of gender equality has been multiple, some have focused on emphasizing gender differences, others have focused on equality between the genders,
and some have even emphasized gender diversity and diversity policies or identified the differences among women (Peterson, 2007).

It is an important part of every organization to have a strategy to deal with diversity and gender equality (Ghorashi & Sabelis, 2013). It is unfortunately too often accepted within organizations that dominant groups have more say in the managerial part. Because of this, the groups who have less say, usually ethnic groups and women, are less likely to get promotions to the top positions. Strategies or programs designed to enforce equality have become more popular in the last decades due to the increase in diversity in the workplace. These strategies must be enforced in the right manner to work as intended. (Ghorashi et al., 2013).

2.3. Human resource management (HRM) maturity in Iceland

There are five stages or maturity levels to HRM within organizations according to Kearns (2010). The first stage is 0, when there is no conscious HRM management within an organization, this means that the head of the company oversees HRM without any evaluation of performance, only with focus on paying the wages, hiring/firing and dealing with problems that occur with instinct rather than focused decisions. Communication between staff and managers is minimal.

Stage 1 is a traditional HRM, the heads of the organizations are aware that the HR related decisions are based on intuition much like in stage 0 and will not be affective for improvement for the organization. Not a lot of effort is put into anything related to HRM, but they do oversee wages manage staff but often over pay to keep turnover low. Communication in stage 1 is mostly from managers to employees. Stage 2 is professional HRM, where HR related issues are dealt with each day, but only sometimes in alongside an HR employee. The hiring process is rather casual, but with a touch of professional guidelines. Training and development is mostly seminars in line with needs within the organization, all departments have employee guides, and jobs have job descriptions. Improved performance leads to a wage increase and sometimes communication between managers and employees goes both ways.

Stage 3 is effective HRM, where the HRM department is well organized and efficient. The organization uses professional HR employees to influence improvements for the organization. More than one person oversees the hiring and applicants are evaluated and compared. Performance evaluation is done on a regular basis with feedback and the employees are very informed about the organizations HRM policy. In
this stage, organizations need to have a formal HR department and a HR manager in place in the company board. The highest stage, stage 4, is the integration of HRM into the operation of an organization. This is an organization that considers it’s human resource an important asset to the evolution and future growth of the organization. Performance evaluation is a part of company evaluation, the hiring process is very accurate and specialized skills, and traits are considered. Training and development is taken very serious to improve success along with employee perception. In this stage, HRM departments are very connected to all business oriented decisions daily along with all policy making (Einarsdóttir, Bjarnadóttir, Ólafsdóttir, & Georgsdóttir, 2015).

The Cranet report about human resource management maturity in Iceland that came out in 2012 is a part of an international network (Cranfield Network on International Human Resource Management) with over 40 universities that took part in as many countries (Einarsdóttir et al., 2015). This report examined all organizations in Iceland with over 70 employees. According to this study, only 59% of organizations that participated had a HR department. The mean amount of employees behind every HR employee in Iceland was 132 (although the SD was 116 which is quite high), which means that for each 132 employees, there is one HR employee working in the organization. In the year 2012, when the Cranet report was published, a written equality policy which is obligatory for companies by law, was in place in 84% of Icelandic companies. This number increased to 87% by 2015. The maturity level of Icelandic organizations, although increasing between years, is in the maturity level 2, out of 4 maturity levels (0 being the first level), making Iceland low on the HRM maturity scale (Einarsdóttir et al., 2015).

2.4. Job satisfaction
Job satisfaction is a social psychological construct, which refers to the internal orientation that employees have concerning their occupation (Pham & Panuwatwanich, 2016). Job satisfaction is therefore influenced by each employee’s values, needs and expectations. Job satisfaction is important to every organization because of it being a predictor of performance and productivity of employees. Managers of organizations desire high job satisfaction to ensure a positive working environment to increase efficiency and decrease disciplinary problems, employees will provide better service that will increase productivity and customer satisfaction will rise (Kara, Uysal & Magnini, 2012).
High job satisfaction with employees does not just have the potential to increase productivity, but can also impact competitiveness, increase customer satisfaction and growth potentials of an organization (Millán, Hessels, Thurik & Arguado, 2013). It can also decide what field you choose to work in or what organization you pick as your employer. Because of the importance of job satisfaction to multiple aspects of an organization, it has been the interest of research for decades. Researchers have studied many aspects of job satisfaction, for example its determents, what increases it, what decreases it and so on. Some research has considered job satisfaction within self-employed individuals and have found out that they tend to have higher job satisfaction than employees (Fortney, lucherhand, Zakletskaia, Zgierska & Rakel, 2013; Andersen et al., 2017; AlAzzam et al., 2017; Böckerman et al., 2007; Semykina et al., 2013; Kristbergsdóttir, Hafnsteinsson & Einarsdóttir, 2008).

Job satisfaction can be difficult to research thoroughly, because it is a heterogeneous phenomenon and its self-reported variables can be affected with multiple variables such as financial aspects, hours worked each day, benefits and more, all different between individuals who place different importance on job-related aspects (Millán et al., 2013). Some of the variables that can affect every one’s self-assessment on job satisfaction can be environmental, employee’s characteristics, organizational factors, peer relationships or even emotional intelligence, both employees and employers (Shooshtarian, Ameli & Aminilari, 2013; Purpora & Blegen, 2015).

Some of the variables that can affect job satisfactions can be divided into two categories, intrinsic and extrinsic. Extrinsic being things like wages, working conditions or supervision, all factors coming from the employee’s environment (Zopiatis, Constanti & Theocharous, 2014). Intrinsic factors are for example routinization, lack of promotional opportunity, role conflict, growth and recognition, factors more connected to each employee’s personal achievement and efforts and whether they are being appreciated by employers (Zopiatis et al., 2014; Buitendach & De Witte, 2005).

According to Per Shallal (2011), the factors often used to measure job satisfaction are things like total wages, job security, promotion prospects, supervisor relationship, initiative opportunities, the actual work and lastly work hours. However, some things can affect the outcome like gender, age, organizational involvement or self-esteem. According to Kim (2005), the gender difference in job satisfaction could be explained by intrinsic versus extrinsic factors because women view intrinsic factor more important when evaluating their own job satisfaction. Job satisfaction can also be
associated with burnout, stress, and deprived health results such as fatigue, somatization, exhaustion or even social withdrawal (Khamisa, Oldenburg, Peltzer & Ilic, 2015).

Employees facing unpleasant working conditions, uncertainty, poor promotion chances and finally, lack of job security and stability, workplace violence, the feel of neglect and the prevalence of discrimination, are more likely to have lower job satisfaction which can result in higher turnover (Böckerman & Ilmakunnas, 2009; Origo & Pagini, 2009; Purpora et al., 2015).

In 1968, Herzberg came forward with a theory about two-factor job satisfaction. His theory separated satisfaction and dissatisfaction into two independent variables, instead of two opposite extremes, were the opposite of satisfaction would be no-satisfaction instead of dissatisfaction (Tominc et al., 2017).

The different aspects of job satisfaction have been studied intensely and the results used in HR departments, to motivate and increase satisfaction with employees, looking at job satisfaction from every angle possible, what it increases and what the consequences of low job satisfaction can result in for each organization (Andersen, Fishwick, Robinson, Wiezer, Mockallo, & Grosjean, 2017). Like mentioned before, there are many different factors that can result from low job satisfaction, for example mental health issues like self-esteem problems, anxiety, burnout or even depression. It can also be responsible for more sick days and increased turnover rate. Studies show different results regarding what can increase job satisfaction. Some of these factors are empowerment, workload control, autonomy or good leadership. A study (Andersen et al., 2017) on 10,427 participants found that social support from superiors had the strongest association with job satisfaction along with social support from colleges. Influence at work was also an important factor connected to job satisfaction, which can be related to the before mentioned empowerment and autonomy. The overall findings of this study were that psychosocial factors of the work place environment were very important to job satisfaction, more so than physical work factors (Andersen et al., 2017).

What often comes up when going through research about job satisfaction and women is the family-work conflict. Meaning that family roles or being a parent and/or a spouse interferes in the career for workers, mostly for women. The family-work conflict may have some connection to job satisfaction in an opposite way, meaning that work interferes with people’s leisure time and the time they want to spend with their families.
However, what different studies have found out is that what seems to be the most important factor for women when it comes to job satisfaction, is the quality of their relationship with their superior or boss. Women may stay in a job they are not satisfied with for gaining experience, skills and growth and out of several factors. These factors can be respect, to gain experience or to be challenged, feeling those aspects are more important than job compensations because of women’s appreciation of personal growth and constant learning (Shallal, 2011). Although the work-family policies that promote flexibility for employees can cause anxiety for both genders, they choose to alleviate from their full-time work to have more work-family balance both genders can be seen as less committed to their work compared to their co-workers (Lundkvist, 2015). The work-family conflict is explained as a conflict that happens when work or personal life interferes with or is non-compatible with the other, as when personal life interferes with a person’s career and its development and when a person’s career interferes with a person’s family or personal life and its development (AlAzzam, AbuAlRub & Nazzal, 2017). This kind of conflict can have a negative effect on job satisfaction since either part will be less satisfied because of the other.

Perception of equity and equality in an organization can influence the level of commitment an employee has towards an organization, a greater perception of both means more commitment. Whereas Ramamoorthy et al., (2017) connect Job commitment to turnover along with job performance and according to results of a study. There is a relationship between equity and equality perception and job commitment with women, stating that higher perception of both equity and equality was connected to higher job commitment for women.

Although some organizations have affirmative actions or equality policies in place, that might not suffice for minority or women to gain the necessary support in the workplace (Mor Barak, cherin & Berkman, 1998). Past predictions have been that women and other minorities would increase in the workplace and for them to feel empowered and equal in the workplace was vital for the improvement of organizations and its employees (Mor Barak et al., 1998). These predictions came true and women and minorities have in fact increased significantly in the labor market in the last three decades (Avery & McKay, 2006).

Women and minorities notice certain characteristics of companies targeting them in their recruitment process, associate employers with specific values which can result in companies that use HR recruitment strategies for this purpose can be viewed to
have different values from these minorities and women than from for non-minorities since the perception from these groups differ (Ernst Kossek, Markel & McHugh, 2003).

HR strategies and practices of all sorts are valuable to organizations since they mold in some ways how employees perceive their employers and conduct themselves in the workplace (Karin Andreassi, Lawter, Brockerhoff, & Rutigliano, 2014). These policies can affect worker’s commitment, motivation, and behavior at work, turnover and productivity. However, these policies can have both empowering and disempowering effects on women and minorities (Peterson, 2007). It has been stated that the perception of the strategy or practice is more important than the policy itself and that can be connected to the research question in hand. When a company has a policy about equality it is not necessarily about the fact that the policy is in hand, but how is it being perceived, how is it being implemented or the approach of it is. There are some different approaches to equality policies that fit differently to each country and organization (Peterson, 2007). Another attribute HR practices influence is job satisfaction, especially according to the social exchange theory, which makes the employees feel like the organization is committed to them. According to the literature, a supportive HR practice influences a perceived organizational support, which leads to higher levels of organizational commitment and job satisfaction, along with lower levels of turnover (Karin Andreassi et al., 2014). Like mentioned before, job satisfaction can be beneficial for an organizations value, this can be measured by multiple things, for example stock returns, industry performance, firm characteristics and more. Job satisfaction has been linked to reduced turnover, reduced complaints and lateness, reduced absenteeism and a lower rate of theft within the organization (Senasu & Singhapakdi, 2014).

2.5. Gender differences in job satisfaction

Gender differences in job satisfaction have been studied and results show different results starting with a study done by Clark (1997), where the research question was “Why are women so happy at work?”. This study was conducted in England, with eight factors to measure job satisfaction. The conclusion of this study was that women did report higher job satisfaction than men and had different values when it comes to job satisfaction. Clark’s (1997) theory of the gender differences in job satisfaction was that women in fact did not actually have better jobs, but because of the lack of quality in the jobs women could at that time, women were used to such worse conditions. Therefore
they needed less to be more satisfied, because they expected less from their jobs because of societies status of the working woman.

According to Kim (2005) no gender difference in job satisfaction appears because of significant inconsistencies in studies and that researchers don’t try to explain why this inconsistency happens. Some research shows women being more satisfied in their job than men, intrinsic awards are more important for women than men due to feminine culture (Kim, 2005). Not only do the genders differ from intrinsic and extrinsic factors, but the discrepancies are also related to how important their expectations are to their job satisfaction. This means that if some of the factors that are important to men, when it comes to job satisfaction, are lacking, it is more likely to affect their job satisfaction than the factors that are important to women. This result emphasises the importance for HR teams and managers in organizations to understand that to increase job satisfaction for each gender, needs different strategies (Kim, 2005).

Gender segregation in the workplace can cause labor market inelasticity and economic incompetence according to Bender, Donohue & Heywood (2005). The reason for it however can be because of early exclusion of women from the labor market and social restrictions they face (Lundkvist, 2015). This can waste human resources, put women in a disadvantage, inhibit change and preserve gender inequality. Bender, Donohue & Heywood (2005) also mentioned in their study about job satisfaction and gender segregation that women don’t view wages as importantly as men as to when it comes to job satisfaction. They also state that women are more likely to value social relations as the most important factor, however, increased work hours are on the other hand more likely to be connected to lower job satisfaction for women. Per data women are more satisfied in their job when share improvement with other women in their workplace and they are more likely than men to value social relations in the workplace along with good co-workers, good supervisor and the significance of the task. There was a connection between gender segregation and job satisfaction, showing that flexibility between home and work is valued greater by women in relation to job satisfaction (Bender et al., 2005).

A study done in Italy states that female graduates feel less hopeful for their future career than male graduates all over Italy because of possible barriers they will face that may affect the development of any job related growth (Iammarino, Marinelli & Marinelli, 2011). Another study done in Spain stated that recent female graduates have lower job satisfaction than male, which might be related to worse job conditions (Mora
& Ferrer-i-Carbonell, 2009). The authors state that previous studies have found that women experienced more job satisfaction in 1997, because of their low expectations and the reason for lower job satisfaction now could be explained by their increased expectations. This could then be connected to women’s positioning in the labor market, which has improved in the last decades, and therefore they expect more now than they did 20 years ago. However, their study indicates that women had lower job satisfaction than men. They mention that this might be related to the gender inequality women have to face in the labor market, without knowing. Another theory they put forward is that women choose a field that has worse job conditions than men, therefore have lower job satisfaction. This has been implied in other research where it is stated that women in jobs with technical responsibilities have lower job satisfaction because of their job conditions (Mora et al., 2009; Kara et al., 2012). A study from Libya among 536 bank employees found that there was no difference between genders when it came to job satisfaction and authors wonder if that could be the result of high gender equality within the bank system in Libya where promotion opportunities and salary issues are very equal among female and male employees (Bader, Hashim & Zaharim, 2013). According to Kim (2005) women in Seoul have higher job satisfaction than men. In a study among 5128 employees, gender was the only significant predictor of job satisfaction. This might be connected to three things, lower expectations, women in Korea might be raised not to express their discontent, which is a cultural factor, and lastly as other research has shown, women value different factors in a job.

According to Shallal (2011), there is a positive relationship between female job satisfaction and age, education, wages and type of work (teaching vs. routine office work), however their study showed that females who worked in a female only environment with only female clients are less satisfied with their jobs.

The literature about gender differences in job satisfaction is threefold, women are more satisfied, women are less satisfied and there is no gender difference in job satisfaction (Kara et al., 2012; Mora et al., 2006; Clark, 1997; Kim, 2005; Bender et al., 2005; Chiu, 1998). However, the reasons behind this gender difference are diverse. Chiu (1998) argued that the main reason for women’s lower job satisfaction was their lack of influence and promotional opportunity, which could be directly translated into inequality in the workplace. He continues to say that the reason for the difference is in fact not because of women’s different preferences since the genders are in fact very similar in terms of what is important to them for being satisfaction with their jobs. Also,
that professional women tend to have high job expectations, as do men, which would make inequality in the workplace a factor that would affect their job satisfaction to decrease. Chiu (1998) goes against Clark (1997) and states that low job expectations are not an influence on job satisfaction for women. His research also indicates that women in higher occupational levels were more satisfied at work than both genders in lower occupational levels.

While women’s part of the labor force will continue to grow, the subject that must be further examined is what this rise of female participation will affect (Semykina & Linz, 2013). What influence does the increase of female managers have on the job satisfaction of employees within organization? Does higher perceived gender equality affect job satisfaction within an organization? One of the factors that affect job satisfaction is the work environment, which is influenced by policies that the organization has in place. This could possibly affect employees differently. Some of the literature (Semykina et al., 2013) states that a male employee could both be more satisfied working at an organization that promotes gender equality, and less satisfied by the possibility of more competition against females for the top positions. Women who have the desire to be promoted could view a good gender equality at an organization as encouragement and even women who do not wish to be promoted could still feel that this kind of policy work is a positive factor in an organization. Semykina et al., (2013) studied this in six countries and found that job satisfaction was positively related to perceived gender equality, however, there was a negative relationship with some of the male participants on this subject. The positive relationship between gender equality and job satisfaction was lower among older women, and the authors hypothesized that women learn to acclimate to men’s authority and therefore become less sensitive to gender inequality with increasing age and more spent in the labor market (Semykina et al., 2013).

There are some aspects on how an equality policy is operated, one aspect is the employee’s perception, which is connected to the study in hand. Creegan, Colgan, Charlesworth & Robinson (2003) found that the employee’s perception of the policy can be connected to the strategy itself, the operation of it, the robustness of it, how radical it is since it must break through the culture of discrimination.
3. Research questions

Drawn from the literature above, the research questions in this study, which is based on the International CRANET survey, are:

1. Is there a gender difference when it comes to job satisfaction?
2. Is there a gender difference when it comes to perceived equality?
3. Is there a relationship between perceived equality and job satisfaction?
4. Is there a relationship between having managerial responsibility and equality?

4. Methodology

4.1. Participants & procedure

The collection of the data, which was a part of a survey for the International CRANET (The Cranfield Network on International Human Resource Management) research on comparative SHRM, was split in two parts, HRM managers and employees. This was a quantitative study with two groups of data, both collected through a survey.

The first survey was sent to every HR manager in Icelandic, both public and private organizations employing 70 or more employees, which was a total of 322 HR managers with a 37% response rate, making the participants group of the study 119. The first part took place in the spring of 2015 and assessed HR managers by a way of electronic survey consisting of 77 items, of which 12 are used in this study. The HR managers, who received the survey, were then reminded by phone and were sent a follow-up to increase the response rate. (Einarsdóttir, Ólafsdóttir & Bjarnadóttir, 2015).

The second survey was sent to 50 or all employees within the organizations that HR managers had already participated in the first survey and they asked if they wanted to participate. These were 35 (N=35) organizations with a total of 2,020 employees. The data used in this survey was only from the second group of participants.

The mean age of the participants was 40-49 years with females being 54.9% and males 45.1% which mirrors the Icelandic population rather accurately. When it comes to education, 59.2% had a university degree, 17.9% had further education and 12.8% had elementary school education, which makes this group skewed towards higher education. According to Statistic Iceland (2017), the education ratio for the Icelandic population in 2015 was 30% with university degree, 35.8% with further education and 34% with elementary school. According to Statistic Iceland (2017), the active labour
force in Iceland in May 2015 was 17% between the ages of 16-24 years, which is slightly higher than the 18-29 year participant ratio in this survey, which was 9%.

4.2. Measures

The data collected in this survey is extensive and will not all be used in this thesis. The variables used are perceived equality, job satisfaction, age and gender and managerial responsibility. To measure the employee’s perceived equality a questionnaire *Perceived Equality* was used, which consists of 9 items. Three items were used, seen in appendix A, constructed by Moore et al., (2010) with good internal reliability, Cronbach’s Alpha of .89. Additionally, six more items were used in the Perceived quality construct, five of which were developed by the researchers of the Cranet report and are related to the five HRM domains (staffing, performance, management, compensation and communication and training and development). Additional, one item developed by Nickel (1995) was used to measure the decision-making procedure inside organizations to define whether both women and men feel involved when decisions at their workplace are being made: “At work, both men and women equally participate in decision-making”. The reliability for *Perceived Equality* was $\alpha = .92$, which indicates that some of the items within the scale might be too related (Field, 2009). However, removing any of the items would not affect Cronbach’s alpha so none of them were removed.

The four items were united into a scale for Job satisfaction by Judge, Parker, Colbert, Heller, & Illies, (2001), (Appendix A), Cronbach’s Alpha was used to find the reliability of .82. They were all answered on a five point likert scale, however one of the questions (“I consider my job to be rather unpleasant”) was reversed during coding to match other in the scale.

A single item was used to measure managerial responsibility, “Do you have managerial responsibility?”.

The two constructs, job satisfaction and perceived equality, along with the question about managerial responsibility consisted of items from the survey sent to the employees. The constructs were rated by participants on a 5-point likert scale, where 1=strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neither disagree nor agree, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree.

4.2.4. Data analysis:
Version 22 of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for all statistical analysis of the quantitative data. Multiple statistical analyses were applied to interpret the data. Cronbach’s alpha was applied as an assenting measure to verify the reliability of the scale for constructs measuring employee-level perception of equality. Multiple linear regression was conducted in order to investigate the predictive relationships between independent and dependent variables. In addition, an independent-samples t-test was conducted on various combinations of variables.

5. Results

The gender ratio of participants was 54.9% (N=521) women and 45.1% (N=428) men, 8.8% (N=92) did not specify their gender.

To test the first research question, if there is a gender difference in job satisfaction, an independent T-test was carried out with two variables. The dependent variable was Job satisfaction and the constant was gender (Men; Mean=3.41, SD=.59; Women; Mean=3.44; SD=.53). There was not a significant difference between genders when it came to Job satisfaction. The effect size was small (-0.05).

To test the second research question, if there is a gender difference in perceived equality, an independent T-test was carried out with two variables. The dependent variable being perceived equality and the constant being gender (Men; Mean=3.88, SD=.72, Women; Mean=3.60, SD=.80). As shown in Table 1, there was a significant difference between gender when it comes to perceived equality (p < .001, t = 5.3). The effect size was moderate (0.35).

To test the third research question, if there was a relationship between perceived equality and job satisfaction a linear regression model was carried out. The model had three blocks and Job satisfaction was the dependent variable, the gender variable was split into male and female and is shown separately in Tables 2 and 3. The first block included age, then managerial responsibility was added to the second one and finally in the third block the variable Perceived equality was added in. Table 2 shows for females that age explains 0.4% of the variance in Job satisfaction. Adding the second block (Managerial responsibility) adds a further 1.4% of the variance. The third block (Perceived Equality) adds 8% of the variance. Blocks two and three were significant for females.
Table 1. *Linear Regression with separate female Job Satisfaction as the dependent measure and Age, Managerial Responsibility (MR) and Perceived Equality as the independent variables.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>T-Value</th>
<th>95%CI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Block 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Female</td>
<td>0.028</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>1.344</td>
<td>-0.013-0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Female - \(R^2=0.004\); \(R^2\)-Change=0.004; ANOVA (F-change)=1.806; Anova - F=1.806**

| Block 2   |     |      |         |           |
| Age Female | 0.024 | 0.051 | 1.136   | -0.017-0.065|
| MR - Female | -0.122 | -0.104 | -2.338** | -0.224-0.019|
| Male      |     |      |         |           |

**Female - \(R^2=0.014\); \(R^2\)-Change=0.011; ANOVA (F-change)=5.464; Anova - F=3.643***

| Block 3   |     |      |         |           |
| Age Female | 0.024 | 0.050 | 1.166   | -0.016-0.064|
| MR - Female | -0.077 | -0.066 | -1.155  | -0.177-0.023|
| PGE – Female | 0.179 | 0.26  | 6.002*** | 0.114-0.226|
| Male      |     |      |         |           |

**Female - \(R^2=0.08\); \(R^2\)-Change=0.066; ANOVA (F-change)=36.022; Anova - F=14.606***

*Note.*\(^*p<0.05, \**^p<0.01, \***^p<0.001*

Table 3 shows for males that age explains 0.3% of the variance in Job satisfaction. Adding the second block (Managerial responsibility) adds a further 1% of the variance. The third block (Perceived Equality) adds 4.4% of the variance. Block three was significant for males.

Table 2. *Linear Regression with separate male Job Satisfaction as the dependent measure and Age, Managerial Responsibility (MR) and Perceived Equality as the independent variables.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>T-Value</th>
<th>95%CI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Block 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Male</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>-0.058</td>
<td>-1.188</td>
<td>-0.08-0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Male - \(R^2=0.003\); \(R^2\)-Change=0.003; ANOVA (F-change)=1.411; Anova – F=1.411**

| Block 2   |     |      |         |           |
| Age Male  | -0.32 | -0.063 | -1.274  | -0.082-0.018|
| MR – Male | -0.101 | -0.084 | -1.700  | -0.218-0.016|
| Male      |     |      |         |           |

**Male - \(R^2=0.01; \(R^2\)-Change=0.007; ANOVA (F-change)=2.891; Anova - F=2.154**
To test the fourth research question an independent T-test was done on the variable “do you have managerial responsibility?” with job satisfaction and perceived equality split between females and males. Those with managerial responsibility had a significantly higher perceived equality for both genders as seen in table three and four. Effect size was moderate for both genders (0.22 for Female job satisfaction, 0.35 for Female Perceived Equality and 0.28 for Male Perceived Equality).

Job satisfaction was significantly higher for women with managerial responsibility as seen in table three. Effect size was moderate.

Table 3. Independent T-test for female answers “Managerial responsibility” on both Job satisfaction and perceived equality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MR</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Sig (2-tailed)</th>
<th>ES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job satisfaction</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.015**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td></td>
<td>.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Equality</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>.001***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td></td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note.*p<0.05,**p<0.01,***p<0.001

Table 4 Independent T-test for male answers “Managerial responsibility” on both Job satisfaction and perceived equality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MR</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Sig (2-tailed)</th>
<th>ES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job satisfaction</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>.108</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Equality</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>.006***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td></td>
<td>.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note.*p<0.05,**p<0.01,***p<0.001
6. Discussion

This study tested four research questions about job satisfaction, perceived equality and the relationship these two areas have with each other. It was also about gender difference within both area. To go deeper into the subjects, managerial responsibility was added into the research.

The first main goal of this thesis was to answer the question about gender difference in job satisfaction. The findings indicate no gender difference. The literature about this topic is not homogeneous as it goes both in the direction of a gender difference or the lack of a difference, without substantial reasoning behind what motivates the difference or the lack of it. According to Bender et al., (2005), several factors can decrease job satisfaction for both genders. Examples of different factors having different influence on the genders are wages having more effect on men, but flexibility or a good work-family relationship on women. However, Chiu (1997) stated that different factors were not to blame for gender differences in job satisfaction; he stated that perceived inequality in the workplace could contribute to lower job satisfaction for professional women.

The participants in this survey were in most parts a very good mirror of the Icelandic population, except for being skewed in two areas, education (in the direction of higher education than the population in general) and age (being skewed in the direction of older age). This could have affected the results of no gender difference in job satisfaction because according to Chiu (1997), older and more educated employees of both genders are more likely to be satisfied if their perceived equality in the work place is high. Even though education did not affect the outcome of this study because of the skew in direction of a higher education than in the Icelandic general population, it’s worth mentioning that some studies have found that women with an upper secondary level and higher education are more satisfied with their jobs.

The second research question, “Is there a gender difference when it comes to perceived equality?” can be answered with yes. Men perceived more equality in the work place than women did. The literature on gender differences in perceived equality in the work place is diverse. Some studies indicate that women perceive it being lower than men (Tominc et al., 2017), but others the reverse (Ramamoorthy et al., 2017). This could be explained by women being more affected by the inequality than the men are.

The results of the present study are in line with the findings of Mor Barak et al., (1998) that found gender difference when it came to perception of diversity within
organizations. The barriers women sometimes face within organizations are often oblivious to male employees since they are not as exposed to it as women. Men are more likely to feel that women get special treatment because of their genders and therefore want everything to be done by formal processes, stating that doing so would eliminate all inequality ignoring or being unaware of the privilege they automatically get because of their gender alone. This directly connects to literature from the United Kingdom, stating that those who are affected by discrimination are more likely to be aware of the discrimination (Creegan et al., 2003). According to Blau et al., (2006), rates of promotion are higher for men than women, other literature also indicated that as we develop higher up the managerial latter, women’s proportion decreases, which is in line with promotion rates (Baldwin et al., 2001).

Another explanation as to why women perceive less equality could be related to the wage difference still being an issue today, where men earn more than women for the same amount of work, same job titles and the same educational background (Furnham, 2011). Despite equal wages being a part of Icelandic law, there are ways to get around paying the genders equal wages. In a recent study at the University of Iceland, gender difference in salaries was mostly due to promotional rates and the glass ceiling women faced when it came to climbing up the hierarchy in the organizations through promotions (Kynjajafnrétti innan Háskóla Íslands, 2017). Research on the glass ceiling concept has shown that there is a gender gap in authority, however Baxter et al., (2000) stated that gender gaps in organizations differ in countries. For example, in Sweden the gender gap is a more around the middle of managerial hierarchies than the top of an organization, however in the United States there is little evidence for the glass ceiling effect, but the disadvantages are greater at lower levels of organizations. That research indicates that the position at the organization could affects employee’s perception of equality along with gender.

The answer to the third research question, “Is there a relationship between perceived equality and job satisfaction?” was also yes. Perceived equality had a relationship with job satisfaction in a positive way, meaning that higher perceived equality meant higher job satisfaction. Reasons for this outcome might be connected to multiple factors. According to Kristbergsdóttir et al., (2008) there is a positive relationship between an employee’s feeling that an organization treats employees with fairness and job and company loyalty, it is also connected to how the employee perceives support from the organization. The authors also mentioned that perceived
support from the organization is connected to job satisfaction, meaning that more support employees feel they receive from their employers, the more job satisfaction they feel.

Andreassi et al., (2014) state that job satisfaction is impacted by the organizations HRM practices, they also mention that the actual perception of the HRM practices or policies are often more important than the actual written policies. This connects to both aspects of the third research question, showing that employees perception of equality or the equality policies within the organization in which they work in, can affect multiple factors for the employees. Therefore, this can affect employees’ job satisfaction in a way that a better equality policy makes employees more satisfied, and therefore more committed to the organization, which means more loyalty, less turnover and more productivity. This has all an overall benefit for the organization when it comes to investing training, promotions and wage increases into employees with strong commitment to the organization (Ramamoorthy, 2017).

Perception of a supportive HRM policy or practices has a positive relationship with job satisfaction (Andreassi et al., 2014) which reflects in the findings of this study. The level of HR maturity of an organization affects the design and implementation of a policy or a strategy and Icelandic organizations are low on the maturity scale (Einarsdóttir, 2015). According to Creegan et al., (2003), it is important to look into and improve the perception employees have of the organizations strategies and policies, equality or other policies. The results presented in this thesis indicate a stronger relationship between job satisfaction and perceived equality for women than men which can relate to the genders viewing or experiencing job satisfaction differently. Some equality policies could seem as a negative thing to men. For example, job flexibility, equal wages, or even equality in promotions could for some male employees seem like more competition which could lower their job satisfaction (Bender et al., 2005). According to Tominc et al., (2017), perceived gender equality contributes to job satisfaction, which is matching the result of this study. They state that perceived gender equality is connected to job satisfaction, however like results of this study show, there is a gender difference whereas women are more affected by the perceived gender equality because of them having to deal directly with discrimination. Some research indicates that men cannot be as aware of inequality, they are not exposed to the barriers like women are and therefore don’t notice them as well. However they can be affected both
positively and negatively when it comes to working for an organization with a strong equality policy (Mor Barak et al., 1998; Tominc et al., 2017; Semykina et al., 2013).

Like mentioned before a study made in Slovenia mirrors directly this study’s findings, saying that there is a significant gender difference in perceived equality, This could explain the difference in significance in the third research question. Although there is a relationship between perceived equality and job satisfaction in men, it is not as strong as in women (Tominc et al., 2017).

Data collected from six countries showed that job satisfaction correlates with perceived chances of a woman to make advancements and get promoted within a company, however, some men consider inequality in the top hierarchy of the organization they work for to be a plus for their own promotion opportunities (Semykina et al., 2013).

The answer to the fourth research question, “Is there a relationship between having managerial responsibility and perceived equality?” was that managerial responsibility meant higher job satisfaction for women and higher perceived equality for both genders. This means that having managerial responsibility has a positive effect on perceived equality for both genders and female job satisfaction. The increase in perceived equality for women with managerial responsibility could be explained with various reasons. As an example, Ellemers et al., (2012) talk about a phenomenon called the Queen bee effect, which is when a woman is put in a leadership position feel the need to downplay their gender identity in order to display masculine traits when in a management role. This can isolate the women leader from other women at the organization and therefore make them less aware of the discrimination or inequality within the organization.

Another theory set forth by Ellemers et al., (2012) is that women convey themselves differently in an unattractive leadership position, connected to the glass cliff concept; this might have a similar effect as the queen bee effect. However when focusing on stereotype threat, there would have to be a negative connection between managerial responsibility and job satisfaction, whereas stereotype threat make a person of either gender act in an opposite way of the stereotypical gender they are in order to not be judged for it or labelled (Kalokerinos, 2017). Wong & Laschinger (2012) studied empowerment with regards to job satisfaction and found a significant gender different which is similar to the increase in this study’s results in job satisfaction when given managerial responsibility. According to literature about women in management, it’s
stated that when HRM and top management enforce and are actively promoting equality, other managerial ranks within the organization are more likely to promote equality themselves (Moore et al., 2000). This is also similar to the fact that women have higher perceived equality and job satisfaction, if female managers are represented in a greater way along with extensive equality programs within an organization, women might become more satisfied and perceive better equality than women perceive with no managerial responsibility (Moore et al., 2000). Against findings in this study, Bruckmüller et al., (2014) states that because of the glass cliff concept, women who do get beyond the barriers of the glass ceiling and climb to the top hierarchy are more likely to be stressed and see a greater risk of failure than men in the same positions.

6.1. Conclusion and recommendations

There are multiple things that can affect job satisfaction as stated in the theoretical chapter of this study. However, it can be valuable for an organization to know that factors like employee perception of different areas can be detrimental to not only moral but also job satisfaction. Since job satisfaction can affect very important issues like company income, turnover rate and the likelihood of burnout of employees, it should be highly considered as one of the most important issues within HRM in Icelandic organizations. Iceland needs to increase their maturity when it comes to HR to be able to better organize implementation and the rest of the processes of policy making.

Gender equality in Iceland is considered high compared to other countries, but because of issues like the glass ceiling, blocking women from managerial positions and promotions, along with gender equalization dividing fields or levels within organizations into female and male-dominated fields or jobs, gender equality needs to improve. The recently released study of the wage gap at the University of Iceland shows that old-fashioned sexism is standing in the way of equality more than people are willing to believe. To increase equality in the Icelandic labour market, the transformation in the institutional part must be focused on, while women’s empowerment and gender equality must stay on the agenda to increase equality within all organizations in Iceland (Rao et al., 2005).

6.2. Limitations & strengths

There are some limitations to this study. The sample used was skewed in the direction to people with higher education and age compared to the Icelandic population and does therefore not mirror it completely.
References


Appendix A

Questions used in this thesis in Icelandic.

Perceived Equality – Skynjun á jafnrétti

1. Æðstu stjórnendur fyrirtækisins meta orðspor fyrirtækisins sem jafnréttissinnaðs vinnustaðar mikils.
2. Æðstu stjórnendur fyrirtækisins hafa verið leiðandi í að byggja upp jöfn tækifæri fyrir konur í fyrirtækinu.
3. Æðstu stjórnendur fyrirtækisins eru virkir í að leiðast við að framfylgja og uppfylla kröfur jafnréttislag.
4. Markmið eru sett um kynjajöfnun og tekið mið af þeim í ráðningum og framgangsákvörðunum.
5. Frammistaða starfsfólks er metin kerfisbundið og óháð kyni.
7. Upplýsingamiðlun er sambærileg til alls starfsfólks og er óháð kyni.
8. Ákvarðanir um laun og umbun starfsfólks eru óháðar kyni.

Job satisfaction – Icelandic and English

1. Flesta daga er ég spent(ur) fyrir starfi mínu
   (Most days I am enthusiastic about my job)
2. Ég fæ mikla ánægju úr úr starfi mínu.
   (I find real enjoyment in my job)
3. Ég álíft starf mitt vera frekar óspennandi.
   (I consider my job to be rather unpleasant)
4. Á heildina litið er ég ánægð(ur) í starfi mínu.
   (Overall I feel fairly satisfied with my present job)