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Der Einfluss von Verfügbarkeitserwartungen auf geschlechtsspezifische Karriereaspirationen

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The Influence of Availability Expectations on Gendered Career Aspirations

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Distinction of Joint Work

This master thesis was a collaborative effort between Alexandra Alexandru and Adriana-Maria Toma, with each author contributing to different work sections. While the practical part of the work was carried out together, each author specialised in a different domain. Thus, Ms Toma tackled gender-related concepts and career aspirations, and Ms Alexandru handled the availability expectations and leadership topics.
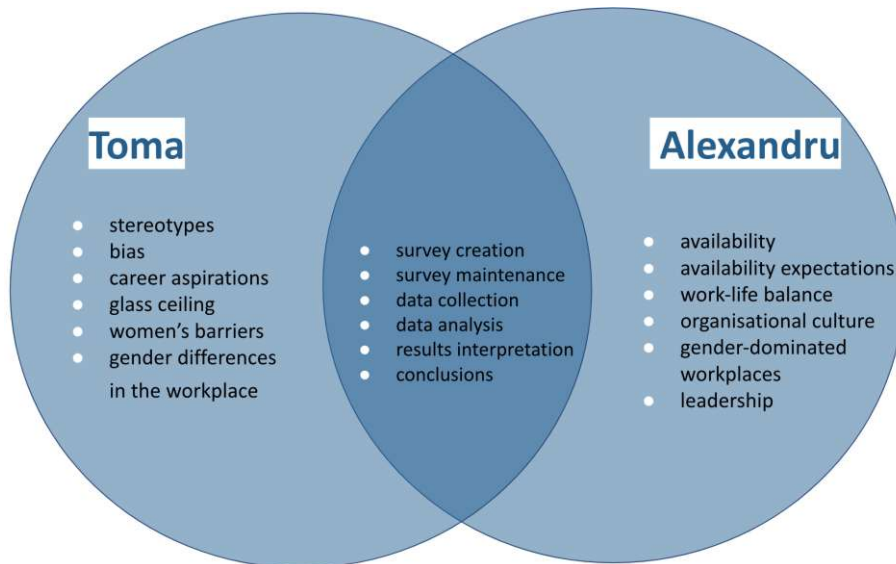

Figure 1: Work distribution by fields

In order to enable an individual assessment of this thesis, below you will find a table depicting the work distribution of the content based on the chapters or subchapters of this work.

Chapter	Author
Danksagung / Acknowledgements	Alexandru
Kurzfassung / Abstract	Toma
1 Introduction	Toma
2 Theoretical Background	
2.1 Career Aspirations	Toma
2.2 Availability Expectations	Alexandru
2.3 The Influence of Availability Expectations on Leadership Career Aspirations	
2.3.1 Leadership	Alexandru
2.3.2 Ideal Leader Traits	Alexandru
2.3.3 The Perception of Leadership	Alexandru
2.3.4 The Influence of Availability Expectations	Toma
3 Methods	Alexandru, Toma
4 Discussion	Alexandru, Toma
A Questionnaire	
A.1 English Version	Alexandru
A.2 German Version	Toma

Table 1: Work distribution by content

Danksagung

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In September 2021, we bravely decided to do a joint thesis, without knowing what a roller-coaster journey we were embarking on. Now, in May 2023, after hundreds of hours of combined effort, we couldn't be happier to share the results of our research. Getting here was a learning process on multiple levels, extending far beyond the knowledge of developing high-quality research.

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Thank you to everyone who contributed to making this journey more enjoyable and fulfilling. Let the next chapter begin!

Kurzfassung

Obwohl die Zahl der Frauen, die höhere Positionen anstreben, gestiegen ist, gibt es nach wie vor ein berufliches Gefälle zwischen den Geschlechtern, obwohl es in der Gesellschaft in den letzten Jahren große Anstrengungen gemacht wurden, es zu beseitigen. Dies könnte auf der Annahme der Menschen beruhen, dass eine kompetente Führungspersönlichkeit die Arbeit über alles stellen muss, während Frauen sich um Familie und Haushalt kümmern müssen und daher für eine Führungsrolle als weniger geeignet betrachtet werden. Darüber hinaus kann eine Führungsposition ein größeres Engagement in Bezug auf Zeit und Aufwand bedeuten, was sich darin äußern kann, dass man außerhalb der Geschäftszeiten für arbeitsbezogene Fragen zur Verfügung stehen muss. Dies kann wiederum dazu führen, dass Frauen für eine Führungsposition ungeeignet sind, insbesondere wenn sie eine ausgewogene Work-Life-Balance oder flexible Arbeitsregelungen anstreben. Ziel dieser Studie ist es, den Einfluss von Verfügbarkeitserwartungen auf die individuellen Karrierewünsche zu analysieren, indem die Karrierewünsche von Männern und Frauen untersucht werden und wie sie durch stereotypische Vorstellungen von Menschen und Barrieren beeinflusst werden. Nach einer Einführung in das Thema werden Führung, Work-Life-Balance und Verfügbarkeitserwartungen in Bezug auf Karrierewünsche untersucht und damit der theoretische Hintergrund geschaffen, auf dem die Arbeit basiert. Eine Umfrage mit über 1200 TeilnehmerInnen aus Österreich wurde durchgeführt, um Rückschlüsse auf acht Hypothesen zu sozialen Rollen- und Rollenkongruenztheorien, geschlechtsspezifischen Arbeitsplätzen, Führung und Verfügbarkeitserwartungen zu ziehen. Die Antworten auf Fragen zu Karrierewünschen, Verfügbarkeitserwartungen und Überzeugungen über Führung und Führungsverfügbarkeit wurden analysiert, um die Beziehung zwischen Karrierewünschen, Verfügbarkeitserwartungen und Geschlecht besser zu verstehen. Unsere Ergebnisse zeigen, dass Frauen und Männer unterschiedliche Karrierewünsche haben. Allerdings haben weder die mit einer Führungsposition verbundenen Verfügbarkeitserwartungen noch die Geschlechterverteilung am Arbeitsplatz einen statistisch signifikanten Einfluss auf die Berufswahl.

Keywords: Führungskraft, Karriereaspirationen, Verfügbarkeitserwartungen, gender-dominierte Stereotypen, gender-dominierte Arbeitsplätze

xv

Abstract

Even though there is an increased number of women who pursue higher level positions, there are still persistent professional gender gaps, despite society's strong efforts in recent years to close them. This could be based on people's assumptions that a competent leader has to prioritise work above everything, whilst women have to take care of their families and households, being therefore unsuited for a leading role. Furthermore, leadership roles may imply more commitment in terms of time and effort, which could translate to having to be available outside business hours for work-related issues. In turn, this can render women unsuited for a leading position, especially if they seek work-life balance or flexible work arrangements. This study aims to analyse the influence of availability expectations on individuals' career aspirations by exploring men's and women's career aspirations and how they are impacted by the stereotypical beliefs of people and barriers. After providing an introduction to the topic, leadership, work-life balance and availability expectations are investigated in relation to career aspirations, thus setting the theoretical background on which the thesis is based. A survey with over 1200 participants from Austria was conducted to draw conclusions on eight hypotheses on social role and role congruity theories, gendered workplaces, leadership and availability expectations. Answers to questions on career aspirations, availability expectations, and beliefs about leadership and leadership availability were analysed to understand better the relationship between career aspirations, availability expectations and gender. Our findings show that women and men have different career aspirations. However, neither availability expectations implied by leading positions nor the gender distribution in the workplace have a statistically significant influence on professional choices.

Keywords: leadership, career aspirations, availability expectations, gender stereotypes, gender-dominated workplaces

Contents

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The persistent professional gender gaps in the modern workforce have been a topic of concern, despite society's strong efforts in recent years to close them. While a large share of academic and popular attention has focused on the existence of gender wage gaps, gender discrepancies persist in many other professional dimensions. In particular, there exist sizeable gender promotion gaps, which lead to having significantly fewer women than men in high-level positions (Azmat et al., 2020). Furthermore, women's under-representation in higher, respectively, leadership positions is a phenomenon also known under the name 'glass ceiling'. This indicates that women face barriers when climbing the career ladder (Dschacht et al., 2017). Moreover, research shows that even though men and women have comparable qualifications, there is a significant gap between men and women regarding their aspirations to work in higher positions (Goodwin et al., 2020).

Multiple factors have been proven to lead to the apparition of this pattern. Among these factors, differences in career aspirations between men and women, which are heavily influenced by societal gender role stereotypes (Eagly & Wood, 1987), are a significant contributor to the relatively low number of women who are engaged in leadership positions and who apply for them (Goodwin et al., 2020).

Gender stereotypes will be introduced in greater detail in the next chapter, but more precisely, we will focus on how they influence one's career aspirations towards leading roles. *Career aspirations* refer to a person's goals and desires for their future career or profession. Not only are they influenced by a variety of external factors but also by a person's values and interests (Hartman & Barber, 2019). In terms of values, research suggests yet another significant difference between genders. On the one hand, men link higher value with objective results such as remuneration, while on the other hand, women appreciate feelings of accomplishment and prefer stronger social connections (Dschacht et al., 2017).

Even though in the 21st century, there has been an increase in women who joined the Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine (STEMM) fields, their under-representation is still noticeable (Nash & Moore, 2021). Men are predominantly the ones holding the majority of positions in technical jobs.

Nonetheless, throughout various domains, the higher strata of career ladders and work hierarchies continue to be dominated by men (Dschacht et al., 2017). At the same time, women remain vastly underrepresented in leadership positions, even in fields historically dominated by women (Gregor & O'Brien, 2016), such as nursing, teaching or social work. This may come as a direct consequence of gender stereotypes. Since women are more cautious than men when taking risks, they may tend to avoid jobs that involve volatility, which is often associated with higher career levels (Dschacht et al., 2017). However, literature characterises multiple possible factors, besides gender stereotypes, that could lead to the gender promotion gap; we will run into terms such as glass ceiling, wage gaps or discrimination, all of which will be explained later on.

Yet, one barrier of particular interest to us and which makes up a significant part of our research is the influence of the gendered-working environment on employees' career choices.

Even though women's career aspirations have changed over time, and they tend to aim at higher positions, there are still changes that need to be made for women to have the same opportunities as men and achieve equality. Gender stereotypes and their impact, play an important role regarding this (Hartman & Barber, 2019). Although organisations try to depict a gender-neutral image when it comes to leadership roles, these are rather associated with men and their characteristics. These persisting trends make it more difficult for women to pursue high-level positions (Nash & Moore, 2021).

Furthermore, in times when 'new work' emerges, the rising *availability expectations* leaders have from their employees, mainly to be available for work-related matters around the clock, even outside the agreed business hours) might have a stronger impact on the employees' long-term professional choices, particularly for those who aim at maintaining a healthy work-life balance. These being considered, women could be more reluctant to apply for such roles when taking into account gender stereotypes and the responsibilities and availability expectations that are implied by leadership positions.

On top of this, workplaces are gendered spaces in which masculine traits and unconstrained availability are usually highly valued, thus portraying women as the opposite of the 'ideal worker' (Borgkvist et al., 2021) and making it even more difficult for them to ascend in their workplace hierarchy.

Among numerous factors that could play a role in the career decision-making process, we tried to identify if people's general perception of a leadership position and its implications could be significant, especially in the context of gendered career aspirations.

While there is vast research on the topic of leadership, various leading approaches and their impact, there is almost no research-based study that pinpoints the mass perception that

being a leader implies putting in more effort than being a simple employee. Although there is research that shows that availability outside working hours is present for all employees, in general, (Christin, 2015), we have not been able to find studies that investigate how it influences their careers aspirations, especially in the case of female employees. After reviewing numerous state-of-the-art articles, studies, and papers, there is still one recurrent question which remains unanswered: **how do availability expectations affect gendered career aspirations?**

Therefore, to understand the impact of people's perception of leadership positions, we first tried to document its existence by measuring it on a significant sample of people. Based on this, we wanted to see if women, compared to men, are more likely to consider the perceived implication of a leading position when opting for a certain career path. The procedure and the results are explained at length in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 2

Theoretical Background

2.1 Career Aspirations

Past experiences or their natural abilities usually influence the career paths of individuals. Experiences refer to the knowledge that a person has acquired through education or work, while natural abilities indicate the traits and abilities that originate from their genes (Gaines, 2017).

Historically women's work activity has been concentrated in a few professions and sectors. Female workers have been disproportionately represented in fields like teaching, nursing, or domestic activities, fields that are associated with female traits. These positions are also undervalued and underpaid compared to traditionally male-associated areas like engineering, management, and construction. Additionally, women's labour market involvement varies across nations and cultures (Sullivan et al., 2018).

2.1.1 Differences Between Men and Women

Over time, there has been a considerable change in the perception of the role of women in the workforce. In the past, it was expected that a woman's place was at home, where she attended to her husband and children and not in the workforce, much less thinking about pursuing a career. This perspective was based on the concern that if women started working, they would lose their traditionally valued feminine traits, such as submissiveness and obedience (Domenico & Jones, 2006).

Before the Industrial Revolution, women could only engage in simple activities that implied assisting men, earning way less than male workers or not receiving any remuneration at all (Domenico & Jones, 2006). During the revolution, there were two major trends. A change in the activities that workers performed, namely a shift from agriculture to manufacturing, also brought along the migration of people to the big cities, leaving the countryside behind. These movements caused emancipation which manifested in various

aspects. There was an increase in people choosing higher education levels, a decrease in pregnancies, and gender-related changes in the labour market. Therefore, the involvement of women in the labour force was crucial in the context of evolution since it both boosted and reflected progress. Women joining the workforce led to increased labour inputs and, consequently, to faster economic growth. This also contributed to higher household incomes reducing thus poverty and allowing increased spending on goods and services. As countries developed, women typically enhanced their skills, and the societal barriers that impeded their progress decreased, resulting in more and more women participating in the labour force outside their households (Verick, 2018).

Furthermore, the geographical distribution of economic progress and employment opportunities are essential when deciding if women can be accepted to any kind of job, especially when social conventions establish the acceptable parameters of female employment. In developing countries with an increase in women's labour force participation, labour-intensive manufacturing has served as a significant means for women to work outside their homes, even though they faced challenges (Verick, 2018).

When women first started entering the workforce, they faced social disapproval. Even though some of them explored career opportunities, they were often seen as temporary employees and expected to prioritise marriage and having children (Domenico & Jones, 2006).

As observed, the increase of women's prevalence in the labour force throughout time has been slow and restricted when considering the fields they engaged in (Verick, 2018). Teaching, nursing, and clerical work became more accessible to female workers and were considered appropriate for unmarried women due to their feminine job nature (Domenico & Jones, 2006).

Moreover, women have often been perceived as less able or less suited for different types of work in comparison to men. This view was frequently underlined by gender stereotypes and societal expectations. These factors can significantly influence a woman's career aspirations: as shown by research. Stereotypes not only affected women's choices and opportunities in the workforce but were also the reason why women encountered difficulties when wanting to pursue other jobs than the ones associated with their traits or aspiring at higher-level positions (Domenico & Jones, 2006).

When it comes to career aspirations and exploring professional advancement, male and female employees tend to have different approaches. Men associate promotion with achievements, while women rather focus on preparing for success and developing skills. Therefore, even if men do not hold sufficient knowledge for new roles, they still act to get promoted. On the contrary, women prefer to acquire the needed knowledge and traits before aiming at a higher position or taking on challenging tasks (Hartman & Barber, 2019).

Looking closer into male and female career aspirations, even more, differences can be observed. A relevant one is that women's career aspirations are limited by societal expectations and stereotypes about gender roles. These create a self-fulfilling prediction

effect, where women internalise the stereotypes and restrict their own aspirations (Corell, 2004).

Nonetheless, women's status in society has improved recently, resulting in expanding opportunities for women in the workforce. They are now working in fields traditionally dominated by men, and they are just as likely as men to aspire to leadership roles and seek career advancement opportunities. The increased status of women in society has also led to greater support for women's career development, promoting diversity and inclusion in hiring and promotion practices (Corell, 2004).

Thus, lately, the career aspirations of female employees have become similar to the ones of male employees, but in reality, do they have equally fair chances to reach their goals? We discuss the question in the following using **Social Role Theory** and **Role Congruity Theory**. Then, we link these with theories about men's and women's behaviour in the workplace and the gender stereotypes that lead to them having different career aspirations.

Social Role Theory

In general, women tend to choose jobs that align with traditional gender roles, such as in the non-profit sector, healthcare, education, and social work. These jobs are perceived to be more suitable for them because they are traditionally associated with nurturing, caring and helping other people, traits commonly linked with the feminine gender. These gender stereotypes are deep-rooted in our society, and women may feel pressure to conform to them when choosing their career path. The reasons behind this perception might be justified by the *Social Role Theory*, which explains that gender and stereotypes are acquired through socialisation and how individuals tend to think and feel about themselves and others (Eagly & Wood, 1987). Furthermore, the theory assumes that gender stereotypes derive from the way society assigns tasks and responsibilities based on gender.

Stereotypes are defined as 'cognitive shortcuts' that classify human beings based on different features, such as race or gender, allowing people to make judgements about others based on them. Building on this idea, living in a society where stereotypes are so ingrained may lead to biases. A *bias* represents a perpetual, often unconscious assumption after being exposed to these prejudices (Hill et al., 2016).

For example, this stereotypical judgement can be best observed in Western societies, where men's over-representation in high-paying jobs of higher power and the disproportionate assignment of nurturing roles (reproductive activities, childcare and domestic chores) to women have deepened gender stereotypes. By the same token, the social role theory suggests that there are two main types of gender roles: *agentic*, which are associated with assertiveness, independence, competitiveness, and domination and *communal* roles, which are associated with warmth, nurturing, empathy, and concern for others. These roles are not inherently different but are created by socialisation and societal expectations.

Men are usually expected to take on agentic roles, while women are expected to take on communal roles (Eagly & Wood, 1987).

On one side, women are often expected to prioritise and choose caretaking and nurturing roles, which can make careers in fields such as healthcare, education, and social work more appealing. On the other side, men are often expected to prioritise achievement and competition, which can make careers in fields such as finance, engineering, and technology more attractive. These societal expectations can also impact the behaviour and attitudes of individuals within these career fields, with women expected to behave in a cooperative and empathetic manner and men expected to be competitive and decisive (Eagly & Wood, 1987).

A recent study emphasises and reinforces these ideas, by stating that women are more likely to show empathy because of stereotypical expectations. In comparison to men, they are assumed to be more understanding and thoughtful because of their caretaking roles (Löffler & Greitemeyer, 2021). Consequently, both men and women tend to choose jobs that align with their gender. Namely, they pursue careers that are traditionally associated with their gender (Hogue et al., 2019).

In addition to influencing career choices and behaviours, gender roles and stereotypes can also impact how individuals are treated in social interactions. For instance, research has shown that women are more likely to be interrupted or talked over during conversations than men (Eagly & Wood, 1987), a phenomenon referred to as 'manterrupting' (Malliga, 2019). Women who display assertiveness or competitiveness may also be perceived more negatively than their male counterparts, as these traits are often associated with male gender roles. Conversely, men may face discrimination when it comes to caregiving jobs, as these roles are often associated with female gender roles. Thus, men who exhibit traits that are perceived as feminine, such as sensitivity or vulnerability, may also face stigma and discrimination. These experiences highlight the pervasive nature of gender roles and stereotypes (Eagly & Wood, 1987).

Hence, social role theory suggests that people behave according to the social roles expected of them based on their status within a group or society. These roles are shaped by the social context and what is expected of them. People learn these roles through socialisation, which involves adopting social norms and beliefs. When people face conflicts or stress trying to meet the expectations of different roles, a phenomenon called role conflict or role strain occurs. Social change can happen when the expectations for a particular role change, and people are influenced by the expectations and norms of their social groups (Eagly & Wood, 1987).

As a result of social role theory, women are likely to experience a **glass ceiling** effect. This effect refers to the invisible barriers that prevent individuals from advancing to higher positions in the workplace (Yazdanifard & Abidin, 2011). Women tend to be excluded from certain positions or opportunities because they do not fit the stereotype or social expectations of the job description tasks. This is another reason that leads to a lack of representation of women in high-level positions, which perpetuates the gender

and racial inequalities that exist in the workplace (Bain & Cummings, 2000).

Overall, social role theory suggests that an individual's career aspirations and choices can be influenced by the social roles and expectations that are associated with their demographic characteristics (Eagly & Wood, 1987). Therefore, it implies that women may then be discouraged from pursuing careers in STEM fields (Nash & Moore, 2021). Furthermore, women may be less likely to pursue careers in STEM fields if they do not perceive these fields as congruent with their gender roles and identities. Social roles, gender stereotypes and societal expectations can therefore discourage women from pursuing careers in fields that are perceived as 'male-dominated' (Diekman, Amanda B. et al., 2010).

The social role theory has been widely used to comprehend and clarify gender disparities, especially when it comes to leadership and management positions (Eagly & Wood, 1987). Just as the theory suggests, gender roles and stereotypes impact significantly people's beliefs, attitudes and expectations about what men and women are supposed to do in the workplace and beyond. People then use to internalise these stereotypical beliefs and use them as a guide for their own behaviour.

Role Congruity Theory

Another intriguing perspective on gendered career aspirations is introduced by the *Role Congruity Theory*, which explains how gender roles and stereotypes influence the perceptions of individuals in leadership positions. The theory assumes that when an individual's gender is incongruent with the stereotypical gender role associated with a particular leadership role, their performance in that role will be evaluated more negatively, namely when people encounter someone who does not conform to traditional gender roles, they may experience discomfort or disapproval (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

According to the role congruity theory, people tend to have stereotypical beliefs about the characteristics of effective leaders, and these beliefs are often associated with masculinity. As a result, women may be perceived as less effective leaders because of their stereotypical attributes, such as nurturing and empathy, than men because they do not fit the stereotype of the dominant, assertive leader which supposedly are the traits that a leader needs to possess. The theory also suggests that this incongruity between an individual's gender and the stereotypical characteristics associated with a leadership role can lead to bias and discrimination against women in leadership positions. For example, women in leadership positions may be judged more harshly than men for displaying assertive or competitive behaviour and may be passed over for promotion opportunities (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Apart from this, stereotypes can have a significant impact also on an individual's self-esteem and self-perception, particularly in the context of leadership positions. For example, women tend to internalise stereotypes that suggest they are less competent than men. This has a detrimental effect on their confidence in their abilities, leading to lower self-esteem and a decreased sense of self-efficacy. Women may act according to these conventions and consider themselves less capable or qualified than their male

counterparts, even when this is not the case. Similarly, men may act according to the stereotype that they are successful and dominant, which can lead to pressure to comply with these expectations. This can make it difficult for men to ask for help or admit to weakness or vulnerability, which can further contribute to feelings of isolation and low self-esteem. Men who do not follow traditional gender roles may face negative evaluations and social disapproval, which can reinforce stereotypes and make it difficult to challenge gender norms (Eagly & Karau, 2002), hence influencing one's career aspirations regardless of their gender (Hartman & Barber, 2019).

Men and Women Display Different Behaviours in the Workplace

Since stereotypes influence one's way of thinking and might even act as guidelines, men and women may exhibit different behaviours in the workplace. For example, women may be more likely to exhibit communal behaviours (Eagly & Wood, 1987), such as collaboration and relationship building. They are also excluding themselves from high-level positions, a behaviour that negatively influences their career aspirations. Usually, female workers are in charge of daily tasks that are required to keep the company operating, hence leaving to the male employees the leadership tasks that are valued more when recognising the efforts by the supervisors (Hartman & Barber, 2019). Men may be more likely to exhibit agentic behaviours (Eagly & Wood, 1987), such as assertiveness and self-promotion. Since leadership tasks are more challenging and mostly men are completing them, they receive greater recognition from their superiors. The same behaviour can sometimes lead to different outcomes for men and women in the workplace, with men being more likely to be promoted to leadership positions and women being more likely to be penalised for exhibiting behaviours that are not seen as 'feminine' (Hartman & Barber, 2019).

In addition to societal expectations and gender stereotypes, *self-efficacy* can also shape behaviour in the workplace. Self-efficacy indicates the belief in an individual's own capacity to accomplish specific tasks or reach a target. This can impact how individuals approach their work and their willingness to take on new challenges or pursue certain career paths. Gender differences studies have found that self-efficacy plays an important role in anticipating career paths and that women may be more likely to exclude themselves from certain jobs or fields if they do not believe they have the necessary skills or competencies. Then, a lack of representation can further reinforce these beliefs, as women may not see many female role models or peers in the field (Hartman & Barber, 2019), which we will approach in detail in the following chapters.

Self-efficacy has therefore a strong impact on career aspirations and advancements. Individuals are encouraged to climb the career ladder when they consider they can achieve appropriate results, even though they might encounter situations requiring greater effort. However, if they lack confidence in their abilities and skills and are discouraged by difficulties, they tend to settle for less and establish lower aspirations (Hartman & Barber, 2019).

Generally, in comparison to men, women lower their career advancement expectations.

On the one hand, this could happen over time because they need to balance work and family life, i.e. household duties or childcare. On the other hand, if they aspire to leadership positions, they often face obstacles due to gendered organisational structures that are linked with differences in power, compensation, and advancement, creating thus gendered examples of relationships, whereas women are confronted with impediments. The shortage of role models, career advice and psychological support, the stereotypes, the care about the equilibrium between career and family, and race and gender identity represent additional factors that influence the different career choices (Hartman & Barber, 2019).

Usually, women consider their careers as representing only one of the multiple elements of their existence, while men have the tendency to focus their whole life on their jobs and advancements. Women feel the need to integrate themselves into community service, spend time with friends, being willing to sacrifice their job for family and children, leaving, therefore men the opportunity to quickly advance in their careers (Hartman & Barber, 2019).

The literature claims that different compensations and incentives are also believed to be influential when it comes to male and female career aspirations because incentives affect work-related motivation, commitment and behaviour. But, as already mentioned, women tend to be underpaid even if they have similar leading positions and educational backgrounds as men. Not to mention, men are reticent to admit that there exist wage discrepancies, thus making it difficult for the system to fight against this drawback (Hartman & Barber, 2019).

Another key factor that influences career aspirations and behaviour in the workplace is *motivation*. Men and women may be motivated by different factors, which can impact their professional lives. For many men, motivation is often driven by factors such as advancement, higher wages, control, and the opportunity to work in independent, autonomous, and competitive environments. These are often associated with traditional male career paths and can lead men to pursue fields that offer opportunities for upward mobility, financial gain, and individual recognition. For women, motivation may be influenced by different factors, such as the desire to balance work and family responsibilities, social engagement, integration with colleagues, and opportunities for cooperation and collaboration. This difference in motivation can determine men and women to pursue divergent career paths. Thus, they end up making different career choices and displaying different behaviour at the workplace. Women may be more likely to prioritise work-life balance and social connections over individual achievement and recognition, while men may be more focused on advancing their careers and achieving financial success (Hartman & Barber, 2019).

However, over the past few decades, there has been progress in women entering management positions (Hyland et al., 2020). Existing research shows that the 'feminisation' of management has affected women's progress in the workplace. Companies are making a shift toward a more collaborative and relationship-oriented management style. Although it may appear beneficial for women, this has also caused a backlash against women

who display more traditional male characteristics such as assertiveness, ambition, and competitiveness. The *backlash effect* is a concept that refers to the social and interpersonal costs that women may face when they deviate from traditional gender roles and display assertive or dominant behaviour, specifically, when they behave in a manner that is opposite to traditional gender stereotypes. Basically, it occurs because agentic women violate gender role expectations. As a result, they may be punished with social sanctions such as disapproval, rejection, and derogation and face social and economic penalties, including being disliked, seen as less competent, and less likely to be hired or promoted. Women deviating from their expected nature can result in them receiving negative evaluations and judgements. This effect may be particularly pronounced for women who occupy positions of power and authority, as they adopt incongruity and disobey traditional gender roles to a greater extent than women in more subordinate roles (Rudman & Glick, 1999).

So far, it has been shown that gender stereotypes can limit women's choices and opportunities in the workforce and make it more difficult for them to succeed in certain types of jobs (Hentschel et al., 2021). Furthermore, women are perceived as less competent than men and are therefore less likely to be promoted or to be given challenging assignments (Corell, 2004).

Recent studies show in various ways how gender stereotypes can lead to bias against women in selection and promotion decisions. For instance, when decision-makers were presented with identical resumes, once with female and once with male names, resumes with a female name were less likely to be selected for an interview and to be offered a job (Kiser, 2015). Undoubtedly, this plays a key role in their career advancement and career planning. On top of that, women are known to often face harassment and discrimination in the workplace, which can create a hostile environment that makes it even harder for female employees to succeed (Kiser, 2015).

Gender stereotypes have become so well rooted within our societies that deviating from the belief that men are more likely to fulfil the breadwinner role and women the homemaker one, may even have negative consequences. As research illustrates, it could go as far as men who participate in non-work activities get to be perceived as disagreeable with the male gender role. In conclusion, non-compliance to gender stereotypes could have its downsides, even for men. For example, while female employees who are concentrated on their families obtain higher rewards, male employees who are family-oriented and take parental leaves are being 'punished' with lower performance rates. Vice versa, men who are more engaged in their careers obtain higher rewards than women who are work-oriented (Lyness & Judiesch, 2008).

Hence, different career aspirations between men and women are influenced by a number of factors. Along with behaviour and expectations, societal beliefs and stereotypes can affect these gender disparities. Men are more inclined to choose careers in traditionally male-dominated industries like engineering or finance, whereas women might be more inclined to choose occupations in social work or education, as put forward by the social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 1987). The differences in self-efficacy and motivation, as

12

well as gender stereotypes and expectations, may be the causes of these discrepancies in job goals. Additionally, women, compared to men, may experience even more barriers to career advancement, limiting their job aspirations.

H1: Women have different career aspirations than men.

2.1.2   The Impact of Organisation Context on Career Aspirations

A major consequence of all these factors is the fact that they emerge into organisations, leading to the 'gender division of labour' and masculine ideals-based systems. Therefore, differences in male and female job designs, salaries, decision-making, actions, power, and advancement are noticeable and affect one's career aspirations (Hartman & Barber, 2019).

Individuals internalise the stereotypes and behave according to them in such a way that women rather engage in jobs that are associated with female traits. At the same time, men are more likely to seek jobs that are related to male characteristics. As a consequence, workplaces can become dominated by one gender. A **gender-dominated workplace** is a term used to describe a workplace in which the majority of the employees are of one gender, typically men. This can create a culture and environment that is not inclusive or equitable for employees of the underrepresented gender and can lead to further discrimination and bias (Bradley, 1998). In these skewed groups, the dominant type is known to control the whole group, including its culture. This can often be observed in male-dominated industries, such as finance or technology (Joecks et al., 2013) or in female-dominated ones, such as social work or nursing (Domenico & Jones, 2006).

To better describe career paths segregation, *gender regime* is a term used to characterise the culture and norms of gender relations in an organisation. The gender regimes consist of 'gender division of labour', gender relationships of power, empathy and people interaction. These criteria are used to explain how and why men and women have separate activities and work in different departments and why they are inclined to make such choices. Women are underrepresented in positions of power at all levels, as they rose slowly because of the organisational cultures' failures. Even though women succeed and have a leadership position, there is still a remarkable difference in the distribution of men and women in the hierarchy (Hartman & Barber, 2019) as it can also be noticed in Figure 2.1. The pie charts present the percentage of women on different levels of the career ladder within the top 100 media corporations worldwide (Nordicom, 2018).

Figure 2.1: Share of men and women in the top 100 international media corporations in 2017, by gender (Nordicom, 2018)

Furthermore, in Western organisations, 46% of the workers are female, with 51% having finished their Bachelor's studies and 45% having completed other equivalent degrees. Nevertheless, statistics linked to leadership positions reveal discrimination because women represent only 4% of the highest-rated organisations and 0,4% of the CEOs, 13% of senators, 14% of congressional members, 10% of politicians with decision-making power and 2% of the high-level military. This under-representation of women in higher positions is a consequence of factors such as women's commitment to their families and predisposition to show fewer of the qualities, respectively, the male-associated traits and ambitions necessary for them to be successful (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Therefore there are considerably fewer women with appropriate skills who could get promoted (Hartman & Barber, 2019).

Male-dominated Environments

Most workplaces are rather male-dominated due to several factors, including historical and cultural norms that assisted in placing male workers in high positions of power and influence. Women's background, historical aspects and the daily concerns that they have, such as household duties and childcare, also contributed to the ongoing gender gap and women's inequity within organisational systems. In such organisations, men have the most influence, and they hold power when it comes to decision-making, having a negative impact on women, who face discrimination, harassment and stereotyping. Despite the progress in reducing these, women who are employed in male-dominated systems are still challenged (Gaines, 2017).

In spite of these challenges, many women continue to pursue and succeed in male-dominated workplaces. However, they need to put in more effort to enter such organisations (Smith, 2013), with a culture that is influenced by traditional gender norms and expectations, where according to the social role theory, women do not fit. Therefore, their achievements are usually overlooked or even diminished, which represents additional struggle (Smith, 2013).

Even after getting employed in such workplaces where women are a minority, women believe they will not be receiving enough support from their colleagues (Born et al., 2018). Furthermore, they need to endure various difficulties, besides discrimination, such as being mistreated, feeling excluded and being perceived as incompetent by which their voice is not valued (Gaines, 2017). Because of this, they are not encouraged to engage in discussions or brainstorming sessions. But if they do participate in meetings and exchange ideas, they will have to face judgements (Gaines, 2017). Alternatively, female employees have the possibility to encourage each other within the organisation. However, they may face further criticism if they do not always show reciprocal support (Wright, 2016).

The mistreatment towards women takes also other various forms, such as being called demeaning and sarcastic names by their colleagues, i.e. 'honey' and 'sweety', and goes as far as experiencing sexual harassment. This inappropriate behaviour definitely reduces

professionalism and decency and creates tensions between employees (Gaines, 2017). Therefore, the created space where women are expected to perform their tasks becomes an unsuitable and unhealthy setting that brings along increased anxiety, depression (Battams et al., 2014), and stress due to the poor working conditions (Tophoven et al., 2015). In comparison to men, women feel that in order to be recognised they have to increase their effort and energy, and they consider that they are not given the same chances to demonstrate their abilities (Gaines, 2017).

In addition to this, women are generally acknowledged to have strong communication skills, so it might seem that they would excel in networking. But networking in the business world often occurs around activities that are typically regarded as 'masculine', such as golf or hunting. Women with substantial family responsibilities may have limited time for building professional networks or socialising with colleagues outside of work, thus being difficult for them to bond (Hill et al., 2016).

Barriers Encountered by Women at the Workplace

Reaching gender equality in high positions represents a matter of equity. Power is what defines a leader. Hindering women from leadership positions is a way of refusing them the power to make a change in the world and to achieve further opportunities in their career paths. Race, ethnicity, age, gender, stereotypes, and income are just some of the aspects that influence these opportunities (Hill et al., 2016). These factors are called *barriers*. In our case, barriers represent what women face when aiming at higher positions, namely impediments that stall their career advancement (Domenico & Jones, 2006).

By addressing the underlying judgements and beliefs that create these obstacles for women in the workplace, it may be possible to create a more inclusive and equitable work environment (Eagly & Karau, 2002), so that women's marginalisation is prevented and greater gender equality is promoted. Women need a culture that supports their career advancements and success in all fields. This can involve promoting more female employees into leadership roles, creating more flexible work arrangements, and providing mentorship and support to those who are interested in pursuing non-traditional careers (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Stereotypes and biases

In the previous chapter, we explained how women are perceived as communal and men as agentic. People can suffer repercussions if they do not comply with these stereotypes. Biases may be especially problematic when they are possessed by decision-makers, such as managers. Moreover, male and female employees also fail in self-evaluating because men tend to overestimate, while women tend to underestimate themselves, causing a lack of faith in their own capabilities (Hill et al., 2016). Stereotypes and biases can negatively affect women's chances to reach higher positions due to the feminine characteristics that are not considered to be appropriate for a leader regardless of their education (Kiamba, 2008). The under-representation of women can be defined as a shortage that holds them

back from climbing the career ladder. This concerns the unseen barrier that impedes female workers from promotions (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Furthermore, when considering childcare, mothers have to face strong unfavourable prejudice called the 'maternal wall of bias'. However, fatherhood comes along with benefits because men are rewarded with an average increase in income of 6%, while women lose around 4% for each born child (Hill et al., 2016), thus discouraging them from chasing higher positions within organisations (Kiamba, 2008). The existence of biases, stereotypes, the consequential effects and the fact that they are prevalent in organisations negatively influence women's career choices in such a way that they tend to abandon their aspirations and depreciate themselves (Chisholm-Burns et al., 2017).

Discrimination

There are different types of discrimination, the obvious one and the subtle one. The latter is often harder to detect and address because it is not always intentional, and can be driven by unconscious biases and stereotypes. For example, this can refer to assumptions about a woman's ability to perform certain tasks or their exclusion from informal networks or social events (K. P. Jones et al., 2017).

Discrimination means applying an unfavourable treatment to anyone based on grounds such as gender, race or religion (Pokharel, 2008). More generally, discrimination consists of actions, practices or policies oriented against persons based on their membership in a certain type of social group (Altman, 2011). Besides being considered as an impediment in equality and development achievements (Pokharel, 2008), discrimination is and has been a persistent issue despite the recent efforts done to combat it.

Going one step further, discrimination towards women is a well-known and everlasting issue. It is perceived as inequality and implies difficulty for women since it restricts them from living freely and without inhibitions, therefore affecting their overall well-being. Worldwide, gender discrimination is recognised in religion, regions and communities (Pokharel, 2008), and it has been carried along even in the workplace.

Even though there has been noticeable progress made towards reaching gender equality in the working environments, women still face major challenges when it comes to advancing their careers. One of the main barriers to women's career advancement is *stereotype-based discrimination.* This type of discrimination is based on preconceived notions and beliefs about gender roles, such as the idea that women are better suited for caretaking roles and are not as capable in leadership positions. As a result, women are often not considered for promotions and leading roles, even when they are equally qualified or have better knowledge than their male counterparts (Hartman & Barber, 2019).

Another factor that contributes to the under-representation of women in higher-paid jobs is *statistical discrimination.* This form of discrimination is based on average gender discrepancies in qualifications and traits. For example, if men are more likely to have experience in a certain field, employers may be more likely to hire men for positions in

that field, even if a woman has the same qualifications and experience. This can create a self-perpetuating cycle where women are unable to gain the experience and qualifications necessary to advance in their careers (Hartman & Barber, 2019).

Discriminatory attitudes and *self-stereotyping* play a role in women's under- representation as well. Discriminatory attitudes are based on biased beliefs about women's abilities and competencies. Self-stereotyping, on the other hand, occurs when women internalise these biased beliefs and begin to doubt their own abilities and potential for career advancement (Hartman & Barber, 2019).

There has been a great effort to overcome discrimination against women. But there is still a very long way to go and a lot of mindsets to reform along the way. Discrimination toward women in the workplace takes on many different forms, and although they are all very destructive, some may be more visible and impactful than others (Bible & Hill, 2007). Frequently, female employees are not taken seriously by their bosses, colleagues, or society (Domenico & Jones, 2006). The effects of discrimination can also lead to various consequences regarding a promotion that eventually amplifies the way men and women envision their career aspirations and strategically set their goals (Azmat et al., 2020).

Lack of mentality to pursue leadership

Research shows that there is also a *lack of female leadership* engagement, especially in the first years of working. This is believed to hinder the leadership mentality. For female employees is more complicated to cultivate such a mindset because they are facing challenges that their male colleagues do not encounter but rather benefit from. For instance, women receive easy tasks at their workplace, having, therefore, fewer chances to participate in important meetings where they could have the opportunity to show their true capabilities and get their recognition and validation (Chisholm-Burns et al., 2017).

This is also one of the reasons why women have such low self-confidence in their own capacity and perceive gender-associated stereotypes as an obstacle to advancing in their careers. Despite the fact that some women reached high positions, the male-female ratio is significantly disproportionate (Chisholm-Burns et al., 2017).

Lack of mentors, role models, and sponsors

The fact that there is a lack of female leaders represents an incentive for a further barrier, namely the *lack of role models* and mentors. If there are no successful female leaders to be seen by women, then they perceive that they are not suitable and can not reach such high positions. As already mentioned, they are discouraged when pursuing leading roles. Therefore a mentor could provide them support, hints, know-how, and help and give them a boost, particularly at the beginning of their career, by sharing some of their own experiences (Chisholm-Burns et al., 2017). But, it is difficult to have access to mentors, especially female ones. Moreover, women do not benefit as much as men from mentorship, particularly when considering wage and advancement advice. Nonetheless, being around successful leaders does not necessarily make female workers feel good about

themselves. On the contrary, it can generate diminishing feelings if they only interact briefly and casually. But, if there is a meaningful interaction with accomplished role models, women's confidence in their abilities is boosted and their career aspirations are higher (Hill et al., 2016).

Work–life balance

Often, women need to put on hold their jobs to care for their families and this can have a significant impact on their careers. For example, they might find themselves in a situation where they need to balance work and family activities, delaying their career progress. This forces women to choose between having a family and pursuing a career. Studies indicate that females may prefer to have fewer children or abandon the idea of having children altogether due to career goals and constraints (Chisholm-Burns et al., 2017).

Succeeding in finding a balance between work and family is a major challenge for women especially when they aspire to high positions. This can be particularly difficult for those females who are raising their children on their own. Typically, mothers are the primary caregivers for children during their peak working years, which can lead to irregular work schedules and time out of their jobs. Furthermore, both mothers and fathers can struggle when they need to leave their children for their work. However, when mothers return to their jobs, which can be within a year or less, they encounter beliefs that state they are not interested in leadership positions, which is unfair towards them. Women who do not benefit from paid leave are typically leaving their jobs or even the workforce after having children compared to those who have access to paid leave (Hill et al., 2016).

Moreover, if we consider higher position roles, these imply more effort, and longer working hours and employees may experience more pressure. Because women also have childcare and household duties, it becomes even more demanding for them to manage to carry out all activities (Kiamba, 2008). These challenges are even more prominent if women face situations where they need to work from home. This is difficult especially for working mothers, since they may face interruptions and further stress because they need to carry out their caregiving duties (Hartner-Tiefenthaler et al., 2022).

Lack of internal and external networks, recognition, opportunities, or resources

Another significant obstacle that impedes women in climbing the career ladder is the *absence of support systems*, such as internal and external networks, acknowledgements and prospects. They benefit less from opportunities to build professional relationships, both in personal and work life, compared to their male colleagues, since their time is limited either due to work or home responsibilities. Thus, they do not always have the freedom to simply participate in different events where they could have the possibility to socialise and build networks (Chisholm-Burns et al., 2017).

Sponsors are powerful and influential people who could make use of their social capital to support and guide females in their career paths and could suggest and facilitate

opportunities for women. But, there is a lack of female sponsors, limiting women the access to such chances, and preventing them from demonstrating their skills. When considering their male counterparts, they have more informal networks and interactions than women, giving them an advantage when seeking leadership goals (Chisholm-Burns et al., 2017).

Salary gap

Another factor that hinders women in their career path is the fact that *compensation* differs for men and women. Male workers are better remunerated even though they are occupying the same positions as their female co-workers (Hartman & Barber, 2019). In other words, men's over-representation in better-paid job positions and the assignment of nurturing responsibilities to women have created stereotypes that act also as barriers for women who consider applying for supervisory positions (Eagly & Wood, 1987).

The wage gap can be referred to as the result of discrimination, which is quite common. In the last years, approximately 30000 cases of gender discrimination were filed and resulted in enforced civil rights, within organisations where employers consider that a woman working in C-level positions should be paid less, or even half than their male colleagues (Hill et al., 2016).

Despite the fact that women hold advanced degrees, they still tend to receive lower wages compared to men. In fact, female employees with bachelor's or even advanced degrees make up only 75% of what men with the same degrees get. In addition to this, there are even greater salary differences when considering females with no degrees at all (Chisholm-Burns et al., 2017). However, men and women work in different types of jobs, and this is particularly noticeable in STEM fields, where there are typically more men than women (Nash & Moore, 2021).

Women Are Less Eager to Pursue Leadership Positions

Recent research has shown that career aspirations provide incentives to be more persevering and are linked to the expectations of success. Moreover, aspirations can be influenced by positive as well as negative early work experiences. For instance, while mentoring can constructively contribute to one's aspirations, barriers (like harassment or humiliating comments) or limited access to different fields early in the career discourages ambitious aspirations (Azmat et al., 2020).

These barriers can affect women's perceptions and choices when planning their career path. Moreover, these also impact their advancements to leadership positions and can be responsible for the gender gap in leadership (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

In addition to the obstacles that women face when pursuing a career in a male-dominated organisation, they expect a lower sense of power than men, when considering applying for a leading role in a male-dominated workplace (Goodwin et al., 2020). The literature describes the working environment of women in male-dominated professions as 'chilly

climates' ('characterised by a subtle process of devaluation, lack of encouragement and recognition') in which confidence can be undermined (Nash & Moore, 2021). Even more, than this, studies managed to show that the absence of women in male-dominated contexts may be a self-reinforcing process (Born et al., 2018). Furthermore, women engaged in teams where there are predominantly female employees, show a higher desire to be a team leader, in comparison to male-dominated working environments. This could be the result of women in male-dominated teams being less confident in their relative performance, less influential, and more often overtaken by others in team discussions (Battams et al., 2014), (Born et al., 2018).

Moreover, women's career aspirations are negatively affected by the fact that men hold the majority of high-level positions and create male-dominated workplaces. As stated by the social role theory, men are having agentic behaviour, being more competitive and assertive (Eagly & Wood, 1987). Therefore, they create and value a work culture that is based on these masculine traits (Azmat & Petrongolo, 2014). Nonetheless, this makes it even more complicated for women to be able to succeed in such environments, besides all the barriers that they face. Nevertheless, if they attempt to behave more agentic, they are perceived as unfit and may be confronted with further discrimination (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Therefore, the mistreatment, stereotypes and biases, lack of mentors and opportunities, work-life balance challenges, salary gap, and generally, the discriminatory behaviours that impede women in advancing and pursuing leadership careers, lead also to an increase in anxiety and depression for female workers who carry out their job tasks in a male-dominated group (Battams et al., 2014). Not to mention they even tend to be discouraged to take up leading positions (Budig, 2002), holding therefore lower career aspirations.

H2: In a male-dominated workplace, women have lower career aspirations.

2.2   Availability Expectations Outside Working Hours

The development of ICT and 'remote working'

In the next sections, we will explore the concepts of availability for work and supervisors' availability expectations after business hours and how they impact and relate to, on one hand, organisational context, and on the other hand, employees' private lives. Before diving into these, it is important to understand how availability expectations developed over time and how current working practices allow for accommodating them. In this chapter, flexible working arrangements (FWA) and people's disponibility and willingness to be available outside working hours will also be presented in more detail.
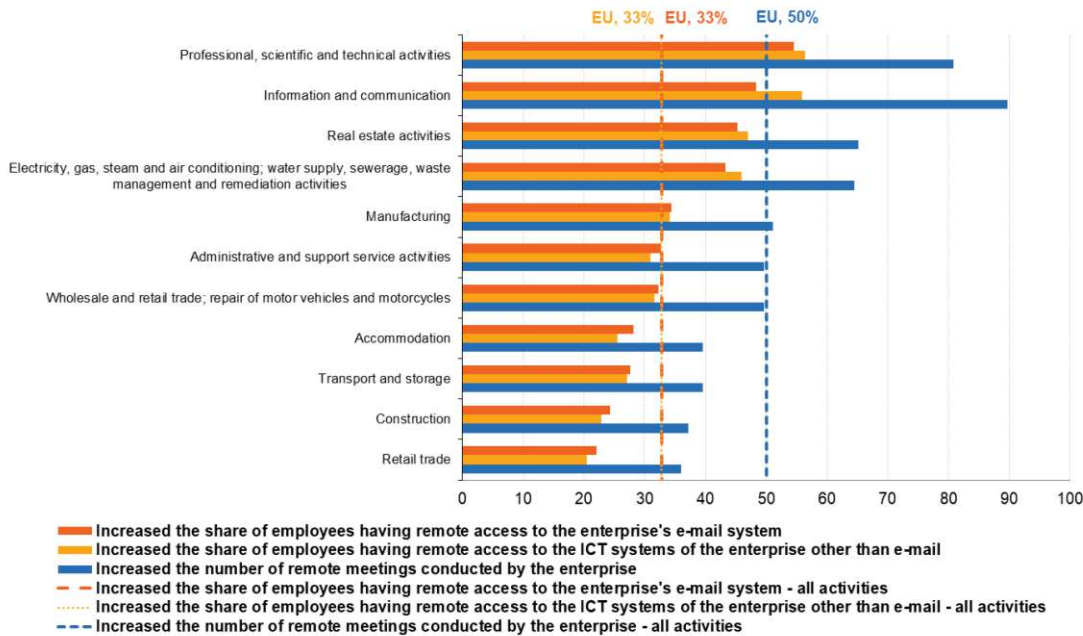
The rise of information and communication technologies, including personal computers, the Internet, and mobile phones, has had a great impact on society and the economy (Othman et al., 2009), and impacted deeply the ways in which people work. ICT has been growing rapidly, especially in recent years, when accelerated by the global outbreak of the COVID-19 virus, which proved to be a sudden and unforeseen catalyst for digital transformation. As a reaction to the contagious pandemic, in a matter of days, schools and kindergartens were universally closed and distance learning and care services were introduced for children of system-critical workers. Worldwide, employees were instructed to work from home, whenever feasible. Non-essential sectors of the economy and public life were immediately suspended in March 2020, while the vital areas were moved online within days or weeks (Bock-Schappelwein et al., 2021). Under these extreme circumstances, ICT has made it easier to accommodate these fast changes by allowing many people to work from virtually any location at any time (Othman et al., 2009), a concept initially coined as 'teleworking'.

Teleworking is described as working remotely while communicating with the workplace through telecommunications or computer-based technology. This method of working can be seen as an early example of virtual work, preceding the use of cellular phones, laptops, and other wireless devices that have allowed for work to be carried out by mobile employees in a variety of settings, such as hotel rooms or airport lounges. Although it increased in popularity only recently, teleworking has been around since the 1970's, when the first oil crisis forced many people to work remotely in order to save money on the rather expensive gasoline (Bailey & Kurland, 2002). Nowadays, the more popular term 'remote working' is used to refer to the act of working from a non-office location, such as one's home, at any given time. This type of work involves using technology to facilitate communication between employees and their workplace, which proved to encourage flexible working arrangements (Battisti et al., 2022).

In the very beginning, teleworking was posing plenty of challenges for the individual workers who were working from home infrequently because they feared not experiencing isolation, missing out on office gossip and conversations, not having access to the same resources or even becoming invisible (Bailey & Kurland, 2002). These issues have been tackled and considerably improved by technological advancements, which enabled whole corporations to work from home through transporting a wide range of interactions in the

online environment (from one-on-one meetings to big conferences and even socialising events between employees). The use of ICT facilitated the creation of virtual workspaces and provided collaboration tools that enable team members to work together seamlessly, even when they are physically located in different parts of the world (Battisti et al., 2022). As the image below (Figure 2.2) illustrates, in 2020 many enterprises across various fields increased remote access to their ICT systems in order to enable their employees to work remotely.

Figure 2.2: Enterprises which increased remote access to their ICT systems and number of remote meetings, by size class, 2020, (% of enterprises) (Eurostat, 2021)

2.2.1   Teleworking in the Context of Work-life Integration, Work-life Balance and Work-family Conflict

Nonetheless, while teleworking provides many benefits, it also poses unique challenges, such as difficulty in separating work and personal life or increased distractions (Bailey & Kurland, 2002). Although advertised as an enabler for individuals to better control their work and personal lives, empirical evidence tends to disagree that remote work is actually beneficial for our work-life balance (Othman et al., 2009).

Work-life balance is a concept that has been intensively scrutinised in research materials as well as within and outside the workplace, in government and employer discussions, among human resource professionals and consultants, in the media and in everyday language (Lewis & Cooper, 2005). For this term, scholars proposed various interpretations meant to differentiate it from related terms. A comprehensive definition describes work-life balance as the extent to which an individual is equally engaged in—and equally satisfied with—his or her work role and family role (Greenhaus et al., 2003).

However, using the 'work-life balance' terminology has been opposing harsh critique, as it does not account for the complexities of the matter. Defining work-life balance as 'A state of equilibrium in which the demands of both a person's job and personal life are equal.' (Lockwood, 2003) suggests a compromise and implies a clear separation between work and personal life, which is not the case for many people as work can consume their lives. 'Life' is perceived as primarily involving caretaking responsibilities for children, implying that achieving a balance between work and personal life is primarily a concern for employed parents. Similarly, 'work' has predominantly been based on a traditional model that involves full-time, permanent employment with a single employer and a conventional understanding of work responsibilities (Kelliher et al., 2019). Moreover, the term 'balance' suggests a trade-off between both work and personal life, but they are not necessarily opposing forces and can actually complement each other. For instance, skills acquired in personal life can enhance job performance and vice versa. Additionally, the term 'work-life balance' implies a simple solution, but in reality, there is no quick fix to the inherent issue of individuals managing both the personal and professional spheres of their lives (Lewis & Cooper, 2005).

To address these shortcomings, the concept of 'work-personal life integration' was introduced. The aim of this concept is to emphasise the importance of combining paid work with personal life instead of treating them as two distinct and incompatible areas of life that must be 'balanced'. It also highlights the potential benefits and connections that can arise from different parts of life coming together. Even so, the terminology surrounding work and personal life integration continued to be a source of debate. One possible misconception of the term 'integration' is that it suggests work and personal life must be fully merged together, leaving no room for keeping the two separate. However, this was not the intended meaning of the term. To address this issue, the term 'harmonisation' has been introduced, which aims to promote a positive and harmonious relationship between work and personal life domains without requiring them to be completely merged

together (Lewis & Cooper, 2005).

Regardless of the terms picked to describe it, achieving success in one's career without compromising their personal life is an ongoing challenge which was intensified by the emergence of remote work. By allowing employees to take their job at home, the boundaries between work and non-work have become profoundly unclear. Numerous studies on the costs and benefits of remote working discovered that the merging of work and home life can lead to conflicts between work and family obligations, known as *work-family conflict*, the extent to which experiences in work and family roles are mutually incompatible (Greenhaus et al., 2006). This kind of conflict usually arises because of the persisting incompatibility between the demands of work and family roles, two different life fields that compete for the same limited amount of time of an individual (Othman et al., 2009). Intensive research has been conducted to examine the work-life interface among various job profiles. The majority of the results indicate that professionals experience a moderate to high level of conflict between work and family or personal life. As expected, dual-career couples with children are the most impacted by the work-family conflict (Kaiser et al., 2011). A solution to that would be teleworking, which can be considered an enabler to reduce work-life/family conflict for both women and men. However, this brings up different challenges based on each family's situation, particularly for families with children, who were shown to increase the burden, especially for women (Hartner-Tiefenthaler et al., 2022).

Working Availability And Flexible Work

In the aftermath of the Great Recession (2007 - 2009), intense international competition and prolonged financial crises have led to significant changes in the way people work worldwide. Among these changes, there have been layoffs and involuntary early retirements, while temporary employment became more popular. In addition to that, as organisations were facing increasing pressure to maintain productivity and competitiveness with reduced resources, many companies have decided on cutting back on rest times, lunch breaks, as well as other non-work activities. The combination of job insecurity, work demands, and job constraints has given rise to a relatively new work behaviour known as 'excessive availability for work' (EAW) or overwork. This notion refers to employees striving to meet increasing work duties from fear of losing their jobs, thus resulting in them working harder and longer hours than before (Cooper & Lu, 2019).

One way to work harder is to extend working hours and stay available also after work hours. *Availability for work* is defined as being accessible and responsive to the needs and wants of one's organisation or customers. The 'always-on' culture, supported by great technological advancements and the need for rapid responsiveness, has made it difficult for people to switch off. Scholars are calling for academic attention and more intense research on this phenomenon of 'work taking over life, anytime, anywhere' in the global arena (Cooper & Lu, 2019). Nonetheless, there is research that shows that it is not the extended availability or after-hour connectivity itself that impacts negatively the employees' well-being, but rather the ways this connectivity facilitates behaviours,

demands or opportunities that clash with people's individual goals. However, there are cases in which after-hour connectivity may also be beneficial to employee well-being, as it creates feelings of productivity and accomplishment for employees and is associated with job satisfaction. (Van Zoonen et al., 2022).

In recent years, the trend of excessive availability for work has emerged in Western workplaces, sometimes involving working even while sick and being constantly accessible outside of regular work hours. As a result, there is an unspoken belief that excessive availability for work is an unhealthy and problematic behaviour. *'Digital presenteeism'* is a term that was introduced to describe one of the consequences of excessive availability for work. Presenteeism means the behaviour of being at work when one should be at home due to illness or overwork. Economists and health practitioners later claimed that this behaviour cost more lost productivity than absenteeism (complete absence from work), leading to a negative connotation. While some researchers have challenged the accuracy of these claims, the negative perception of presenteeism has persisted. Similarly, there is a general aversion towards long work hours or overtime work in the academic literature, with researchers often believing that the benefits of working longer hours are overstated, particularly when there is no measurable proof of increased productivity (Cooper & Lu, 2019).

Flexible Work, Availability Expectations

With concepts such as *work-life balance* and *work-life conflict* becoming ubiquitous buzzwords in modern management practices and job-market-related discussions, companies, including those with highly demanding work environments, have made efforts to address these issues and promote work-life balance practices through their websites and programs (Kaiser et al., 2011). The discussion of work-life issues has expanded to include various aspects, such as work hours and intensification, increased competition in the job market, evolving work and family-related values among young executives, and the growing career orientation of women. Organisations are now expected to establish policies and procedures that enable employees to work efficiently while balancing work and personal life. In high-performance work environments, work-life initiatives have become increasingly important to address the challenges faced by employees who work long hours and perform complex tasks. However, despite these efforts, reconciling work and life remains challenging in many organisations (Kaiser et al., 2011).

One solution companies adopted to address the matter of work-life integration is offering their employees the opportunity to opt for flexible work. *Flexible work arrangements* (FWA) allow them to balance their work and personal responsibilities effectively. These arrangements may involve flexibility in both time and place of work, such as working part-time, compressed workweeks, and flexi-time (allowing time off on one day and making it up on another). Part-time work has traditionally enabled women to return to work after having children, but more diverse FWA options are now considered positive for women's participation in the workforce. Historically, men have used FWA less, but increased use could promote gender equality at work and at home, encourage more active

fatherhood, and offer opportunities for men to prioritise their own health and well-being (Borgkvist et al., 2021).

During tough economic times, work/life programs have the potential to make a significant positive impact on employee morale, reduce absenteeism, and retain organisational knowledge. It is the responsibility of human resource professionals to comprehend the critical issues surrounding work/life balance and support these programs as companies aim to reduce expenses in today's global marketplace. Flexible work/life programs offer advantages for both employers and employees, from helping employees with family members or friends serving their country, to single mothers juggling family and employment, to Generation X and Y employees who value personal time, to couples balancing dual-career marriages, and to companies at risk of losing critical knowledge when employees leave for other opportunities (Lockwood, 2003).

Although flexibility has become a common practice that seems like an appealing solution for all stakeholders, there is still a lack of sufficient assistance available for working parents. In some cases, opting for flexibility at work often results in employees experiencing a professional decline in terms of status, income, and advancement opportunities. For instance, a study carried out in Germany managed to show that working reduced hours as a manager violates the current norms of being available and committed, which can significantly restrict both men's and women's career opportunities (Beham et al., 2020).

Along with fewer promotion opportunities, FWA can also negatively influence *family spillover*. This is a term which refers to the transfer of experiences, emotions and behaviours between an individual's work and family life, as the boundary between the two is considered permeable (Leung, 2011). Both men and women can easily pursue FWA aided by ICT, as long as they align with the expectation that work comes first. However, studies show that the negative spillover risk is higher when the wife is the one working flexibly since she has to comply with the general expectation of prioritising family responsibilities. This not only has a negative impact on the husband's well-being but also affects the quality of life of the entire family. At the same time, if the husband is the one working through ICT after hours, this does not significantly affect the well-being of the couple or family (Ma et al., 2016).

This could be one of the reasons why male workers have more favourable attitudes toward teleworking than females. A 2019 study carried out in Austria revealed that 41% of employees in Austria work remotely, and three out of four flexible workers are men, thus making telework a predominantly male-dominated method of working. Additionally, the results show that women are more likely to work in open space offices or cubicles (Beno, 2019).

Regardless of their place of work, organisations require their employees to acknowledge that work-related responsibilities should be prioritised (Ma et al., 2016). Research has shown that employees who cannot meet the expectations and demands of their organisation, culture, and society are often seen as different and categorised as 'others'. This concept is called 'othering' and is a relational process where individuals are defined

in relation to those with power. In organisations, women (and sometimes men) who deviate from gendered expectations and organisational norms are often othered. Men, who hold more power in masculine workplaces, have the ability to define the 'other', and those who conform to organisational expectations benefit from this. By threatening employees with the label of 'other', the organisation can control how they work in ways that benefit itself more than the employee. Therefore, it is important to understand how upper-level managers view men's use of flexible work arrangements since this can impact the employee's success within the organisation (Borgkvist et al., 2021).

The use of ICTs has eliminated the temporal and spatial limitations of communication, leading to higher expectations of availability across different areas of life. As a result, subjective norms regarding the level of availability one should maintain have shifted. The concept of 'availability expectations' was created to characterise the extent to which an individual feels obligated to be accessible via ICTs in one domain while engaged in another domain, based on the perceived demands of members in that domain (Reinke & Gerlach, 2021).

2.2.2 Differences Between Men and Women

Female and Male Employees Have Different Disponibility Outside Working Hours

Both men and women may face challenges in their professional careers that are associated with organisational factors, preconceptions and societal norms, the existence of informal networks and perceptions of management roles. Women, in particular, experience the double burden of balancing caregiving and other unpaid duties with their paid employment (Noback et al., 2016).

Professional working mothers face unique challenges in managing their work and personal lives, which have been widely discussed in both popular and academic literature. They are often confronted with gender biases, which can make them be perceived as either cold-hearted or bad mothers, or even as less committed to their work. Despite the fact that women now make up a significant part of the workforce, societal expectations about a mother's role in the home remain strong. These expectations, combined with gender biases, make it difficult for professional working mothers to reconcile their identities as professionals, mothers, and working mothers. What is important is then how they manage this integration, which has significant implications in how they balance their work and personal responsibilities (Kaiser et al., 2011).

Research suggests that also young women who own mobile phones experience a lot of negative impact from their work at home and home at work, have a hard time separating work and home, cannot easily make changes to their work schedule and are more likely to feel exhausted from their job. This could be because women still tend to be the ones taking care of household and family responsibilities such as childcare and housework, which can be difficult and cause feelings of frustration, stress, and failure (Leung, 2011).

Several recent studies examined how parents managed the COVID-19 crisis in relation to their responsibilities for childcare provision, employment, working arrangements, and levels of psychological distress. Research indicates that during the COVID-19 crisis, women have had a greater burden in providing childcare, even while still working. The provision of childcare is associated with reduced working hours and a higher likelihood of transitioning out of employment for working mothers. Additionally, there is a new gap in psychological distress levels that emerged between mothers and women without school-age children in the household. This gap is mainly driven by higher levels of psychological distress reported by mothers of elementary school-age and younger children (Zamarro & Prados, 2021).

The same findings suggest that the COVID-19 crisis has led to an increased demand for childcare, resulting in added pressure for working parents of both genders. However, mothers have continued to bear a heavier burden in the provision of childcare during this period than fathers. Additionally, the current working situation of mothers has had a limiting effect on their childcare responsibilities. It was shown that increased childcare responsibilities are linked to a decrease in working hours and an increased likelihood to exit employment. Furthermore, there was a significant rise in psychological distress

levels at the beginning of the crisis, and a new disparity in psychological distress emerged between mothers and women without school-age children in the household, as well as between women and men (Zamarro & Prados, 2021).

FWA could come as a solution to this, as it could allow both members of the couple to share the caregiver's duties. However, the concept of flexible working time has been stigmatised by the working society. Up to these days, many people still view flexibility as a 'female thing'. This idea is often reinforced in the way upper-level managers talk about flexible work arrangements. In a study in which managers were not specifically asked about gender when discussing FWA, they almost always talked about women first. They also mentioned women working part-time, taking maternity leave, or compressing their hours to care for children. This reinforces the notion that FWA is primarily a 'woman's issue' and excludes men from the conversation. In the accounts of upper-level managers regarding FWA, men's use of flexibility was often associated with not having a female partner to take care of children. In contrast, women's use of flexibility was not linked to this same narrative (Borgkvist et al., 2021).

As more recent studies show, this perception might have changed during the COVID-19 pandemic, when up to 40 per cent of the total workforce started working from home. The high prevalence of FWA happened across a variety of professional fields and positions, regardless of the workers' gender (Hartner-Tiefenthaler et al., 2022).

Furthermore, if we consider flexible hours, men who hold high-level roles do not use to discuss FWA naturally. Research shows that men are more likely to use FWA for childcare responsibilities if they do not have a female partner to take on these duties, while situations, when women adopt FWA, are perceived as completely different. Specifically, these circumstances strengthen the idea that children are women's responsibility, and when men have to take care of their children, it seems unusual. Therefore, such evidence only enhances women's need for FWA. Therefore, women are rather engaged in jobs that follow a routine, that can be carried out easily by anyone, and are usually part-time or nurturing jobs (Borgkvist et al., 2021), emphasising a behaviour that is in conformity with the stereotypes stated by the social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 1987). Furthermore, research shows that work-life balance issues are significantly neglected especially when considering women. But, work-life balance is an essential factor for job satisfaction (Guillaume & Pochic, 2009).

These accounts reinforce the idea that women are the primary caregivers for children and that men who take on this role are the exception. This 'othering' of men who take on caregiving responsibilities reinforces the unspoken norm that women are responsible for childcare and care work. This framing fails to challenge and instead maintains and reinforces the idea that women need more flexible work arrangements to meet their caregiving responsibilities, rather than men. In addition to that, those who use FWA are seen as being less dedicated to their paid work. These perceptions continue to perpetuate the use of FWA in ways that reinforce gender stereotypes. Research also shows how men strategically position themselves to avoid being stigmatised for using flexible work arrangements (Borgkvist et al., 2021).

For women, other aspects and values seem to be more important when it comes to how a working environment should look in order to be agreeable or pleasing. For them, not only flexibility but also balancing activities, social engagement, integration and cooperation with colleagues are essential to occur within the workplace (Hartman & Barber, 2019).

As women's perceptions towards their careers evolve and they consider how best to meet the demands of their work and family obligations, they may start to redefine the significance and worth they place on being a professional. Most women aspire to dedicate extensive psychological and physical time to their maternal duties, which contradicts the expectations of professionals who are required to be fully committed to their work and work long hours. This contradiction has led working mothers to adjust their job roles to gain more control over their personal lives (Kaiser et al., 2011).

The participation of women in the workforce is comparatively lower than men. However, between the end of the 1970s and the end of the 1990s, there was a gradual increase in the workforce participation of women, while that of men decreased. Both men's and women's workforce participation declined in the two recessions of the 2000s, as workers became pessimistic about their job prospects. From 2008, women's labour force participation began to decline, coinciding with a period of stagnation in women's wage growth. This decline has not yet been reversed, which could be partly attributed to the lack of childcare, universal preschool, and paid family leave, all of which would help parents balance work and family responsibilities (Kayali, 2017). This was emphasised especially during the pandemic, women were the ones cutting down their working hours in order to allocate more time for handling family demands (Hartner-Tiefenthaler et al., 2022).

This led us to believe that female workers (especially if they have children), are more likely to value their personal life more than their work life and thus, they would also not be willing to sacrifice family-dedicated time in order to deal with work-related matters.

H3: Women are less willing to be available outside working hours than men

2.2.3   Organisation Context Shaping Availability Expectations

In a world where ICT pushed 'new work' to emerge, the whole context of work changes, as many of the common practices become obsolete. *'New work'* is a concept that refers to a more flexible, result-oriented and employee-centred approach to work. Because of this, the traditional organisation, as we know it, is expected to completely disappear once permanent full-time employment no longer exists. Under these circumstances, the companies need to constantly reinvent themselves and their workplace cultures in order to be able to continue to operate (Kouzmin et al., 1999).

The term *'workplace culture'* refers to a collection of beliefs, attitudes, customs, norms and practices, which form together the core identity of an organisation. An optimal workplace culture promotes actions that foster and encourage trust. Every workplace can and should cultivate a positive and efficient environment by adhering to a core set of values that are universally respected and followed by all employees (Beno, 2021).

The factors that make up an organisation's culture could play a great role in the way employees perceive their workplace. Also, the organisation's culture shapes the way the work is done in terms of expectations from and towards employees. The culture of an organisation can set the tone for the way people interact in the workplace and the way they perceive one another. Although not that obvious, workplace culture can go as far as affecting the way availability expectations are defined and imposed within organisations. Therefore, the newly established policies enable employees to become 'managers' of their own time and establish boundaries between work and personal life (Reinke & Gerlach, 2021).

Due to the fact that ICT facilitates communication without the constraints of time and space, there has been a rise in expectations to be accessible and responsive across different areas of life. This shift led to a change in people's personal beliefs about how much availability is appropriate. Because of technology, employees might be expected to be reachable and responsive to work matters around the clock. The growing societal and cultural expectations for fast replies and continuous availability can generate conflicts between individual needs and work issues, especially if unexpected personal issues arise (Ocker et al., 2007). This can make employees feel pressured to work even during their personal time, which could happen because they feel that this is what is expected of them. As a result, they may end up performing job-related tasks outside of their regular work hours (Reinke & Gerlach, 2021). All these aspects can affect work-life balance, priorities, work achievements, and team members' productivity and produce possible delays (Ocker et al., 2007).

Research indicates that there may be different availability expectations that employees perceive from their supervisors compared to their colleagues. Findings show that supervisors have the power to shape a team's availability culture and therefore have an indirect impact on the employees' boundary management behaviour and, thus, on their overall well-being (Reinke & Gerlach, 2021). Taking this one step further, we apply the concept of availability expectations in the current working environments, which are usually built

around male values such as advancement, wage gain, control, independence, autonomy, and competitiveness (Hartman & Barber, 2019). These, combined with the perception given by ICT that people should always be available, eventually lead to creating work environments that put a lot of pressure and bring little value to all employees.

Gender-dominated Environments

Many organisations are aware that diversity is vital for their competitiveness, which is why they implement different programs meant to integrate minorities and support them through their career journey. And even though there is a lot to catch up on in order for the workforce to become fully inclusive, there is an effort being made towards achieving an ultimately all-embracing workplace. But for that to be effective, we first need to understand all the different values and behaviours these spaces bring together and how to establish norms that make room for everyone to feel welcome. This seems to be a recurring issue which appears not only in the aforementioned male-dominated working environments but also in female-dominated ones, where expectations and principles might be different.

A female-dominated working environment is a workplace in which the majority of employees are women. This can be either within a company, an organisation, a specific field or an industry. In general, this term is used to describe a workplace in which women make up the larger proportion of the workforce in comparison to men (Parker, 2018).

Lately, female-dominated occupations were included under the umbrella of pink-collar professions, a name given to jobs in which predominantly female workers are typically employed in service-oriented industries, such as healthcare, education, and customer service. Pink-collar professions usually imply carrying out emotional labour, which refers to the work of managing and regulating one's emotions in the workplace. This can become particularly challenging and research showed that emotional labour factors such as surface acting or emotional dissonance are positively associated with the risk of developing depression. Emotional dissonance refers to a situation where there is a mismatch between the emotions that a person experiences internally and the emotions that they express outwardly. On top of everything, pink-collar professionals experience poor working environments, including job insecurity and high job demands, which contribute to increasing the risk of depression (Chun et al., 2020).

Some professions (e.g. social worker) can be mistakenly thought of as dominated by women, but this is a misrepresentation of their history and current state (McPhail, 2004). For a long time, social work has been viewed as an unconventional profession for men, with women being the dominant gender both in academic settings and in practice (Galley, 2020). The reasons for this stereotype, including the idea that social work is an extension of women's traditional nurturing role or that women have played a prominent role in its development. These factors have contributed to the perception that social work is female-dominated, but this is not entirely accurate. As a study suggests, a more appropriate way to refer to these types of environments might be 'predominately female'

- which would then express the numerical majority of women in the profession, but, in fact, 'male-dominated' (McPhail, 2004).

A study investigating the physical and psychological health of working women in female-dominated workplaces showed that personal care workers and cleaning workers had the highest levels of job demands and the lowest levels of job control, which are both risk factors for work-related stress and poor health outcomes (K. Nielsen et al., 2009).

Numerous studies have demonstrated that women tend to experience higher levels of sickness-related absences than men (Barmby et al., 2002). In Norway, for instance, this gender gap has generally been on the rise (Mastekaasa & Olsen, 1998), though it has remained fairly steady over the past decade, with women being absent from work 40-50% more often than men. Some research has indicated that there may be distinct differences in sickness-related absences based on the gender composition of specific occupations or workplaces. In particular, a certain study suggests that both men and women may experience higher rates of absence in environments where the opposite gender is more prevalent (Mastekaasa, 2005).

Another empirical study found that, when individuals of either gender work in roles where they are in the minority in terms of cultural and numerical representation, it could result in gender-specific health consequences. The study looked at how working in male-dominated jobs (like accountancy) or female-dominated jobs (like nursing) affects people's mental and physical health. The findings illustrate that female accountants had higher anxiety levels and male nurses had more days off due to sickness. Thus, it appears that gender-specific health issues may arise when both men and women work in job settings where they are outnumbered and culturally different from the majority of workers (Evans & Steptoe, 2002).

The best explanation experts could identify for why the gender mix can affect individual employees is focused on how the majority and minority categories interact. Research studying men and women in managerial roles within a large corporation found that female managers face specific issues, not because they are women, but due to their small minority status in traditionally male occupations. The same resources suggest different psychological mechanisms through which being in a minority could have negative consequences for an individual (Mastekaasa, 2005).

Some of these effects could be explained through the concept of *tokenism*, which is based on the percentage of underrepresented subgroups within a larger group, specifically those that are less than 15% of the total. In such situations, the majority members are referred to as dominants, while the minority members are referred to as tokens (Yoder & Sinnett, 1985).

Tokens are usually highly visible among dominants, which can result in performance pressure. For instance, a woman working predominantly with men would stand out and draw attention, leading to more pressure to perform than males experience. Moreover, the differences between the two groups create confusion among dominants regarding how to interact with tokens, leading to tokens eventually being excluded from formal

and informal communication networks. Lastly, dominants may try to overcome their uncertainty by expecting tokens to conform to stereotypical roles and by rewarding only sex-role-appropriate behaviour from them (Yoder & Sinnett, 1985).

A further negative effect of being numerically underrepresented is *assimilation*, where a minority member may be perceived less as an individual and more as a representative of their category, making them more prone to stereotyping. Another common phenomenon is *contrast* or *polarisation*, where the presence of one or a few minority members highlights the similarities among the majority and makes the minority members appear as deviant (Mastekaasa, 2005).

The above-mentioned could therefore represent a valid reason why women generally perform better when surrounded by other women. For example, in engineering, experimental evidence shows that gender proportions in small groups influence considerably undergraduate women's persistence. When groups are primarily composed of females, women tend to be more engaged and participate more actively than when they are part of groups dominated by men or gender-balanced groups. Women also experience less anxiety in groups where they are the majority, especially during their first year of study. However, groups with equal numbers of men and women are less effective than female-majority groups in encouraging equal verbal participation. Ultimately, having female peers in these groups helps protect women's confidence and encourages them to pursue a career in engineering, despite the masculine stereotypes associated with the field (Dasgupta et al., 2015).

And just as women who work in male-dominated fields often experience discrimination and harassment based on their gender and sexual orientation, particularly in groups which display a strong masculine culture (Wright, 2016), men are also facing certain peculiarities when working in a female-dominated environment. Studying men who work in female-dominated professions is important, as it helps us get a broader understanding of the workplace overall and how men encounter, interpret, and handle obstacles to their masculinity(Shen-Miller & Smiler, 2015).

A study carried out in the UK in the early 2000s identified that men working in female-dominated environments take advantage of their minority status through a perceived increase in leadership abilities (the assumed authority effect), receiving preferential treatment (the special consideration effect), and being linked to a more career-oriented mindset (the career effect). Additionally, they often feel at ease working alongside women (the zone of comfort effect). However, despite feeling comfortable, men adopt a variety of strategies to reinforce their masculinity, which is at risk of being affected by the 'feminine' nature of their work (Simpson, 2004).

Interestingly, a study across ten nations analysing perceptions of gender segregation and stereotypes of male and female workers in male- and female-dominated occupations investigated perceptions of agency and communion traits in ten nations, both in nations that are more gender-equal and nations that are less gender-equal. The results showed that perceptions of occupational gender segregation were consistent across all nations,

with participants perceiving men to be overrepresented in male-dominated occupations and underrepresented in female-dominated occupations. Furthermore, social role theory was supported, as subjects in male-dominated occupations were associated more with agentic traits, while subjects in female-dominated occupations were associated more with communal traits. The study also found that men in female-dominated occupations were perceived as being more exceptional from the traditional gender stereotype than women in non-stereotypical occupations (Froelich et al., 2020).

Findings indicate that women who hold jobs in male-dominated fields are typically older, better educated, more likely to have highly educated fathers, and more likely to be childless than women in female-dominated fields. Even when controlling for age and education, women in male-dominated jobs tend to place more importance on definitions of success for their overall well-being compared to women in female-dominated jobs. Work attitudes are generally similar among the three groups, but surprisingly, women in female-dominated jobs actually rate the importance of their work higher than women in male-dominated jobs. The strongest predictors of women holding male-dominated jobs include college education, experiences of sex discrimination, age, desire for a high salary, the importance they place on their work, and their desire to become an authority in their job (Greenfeld et al., 1980).

When it comes to leading initiatives, research shows that in gender-balanced workplaces, male employees are less likely to express a desire for management positions compared to their counterparts in male-dominated workplaces. However, female employees who work in gender-balanced workplaces do not exhibit a significant difference in their expressed aspirations for management positions compared to female employees in female-dominated workplaces. Furthermore, the literature highlights that differences in career aspirations based on gender are not solely determined by individual preferences or broader societal factors, but are also influenced by factors at the organisational level. Findings suggest that gender diversity has both positive and negative implications. On the positive side, gender diversity can break down rigid stereotypes of men and prevent some men from being forced into management positions (for example, through a glass escalator phenomenon) and career ladders that may not align with their personal goals (V. L. Nielsen & Madsen, 2019).

The organisational context can put out a wide range of complex and intertwined issues that may affect each individual according to their gender, age, personality, and so on. Therefore, it is important for organisations to establish a culture which puts forward values that all employees identify with or can adhere to. Especially in a digitalised world, organisations need to constantly reinvent themselves and redefine their practices, which proves to be difficult when having to take into account the ramification of their impact on the employees' lives. One matter that possesses particular challenges is managing to set the boundaries between work and non-work time (also known as work-non-work segmentation) in such a way that the spillover is reduced as much as possible. With ICT and flexible working practices, this responsibility got shifted to the employees, who now have to learn how to manage their time in such a way that they achieve work-life

harmonisation, which is essential for their well-being. This might present an additional layer of difficulty for workers performing in an opposite gender-dominated environment, as they have to undergo additional pressure exerted by being a minority.

Apart from that, individuals have multiple, interconnected identities that are influenced by social relations, history, and power structures. These identities can result in both advantages and disadvantages depending on the social groups to which a person belongs. For example, an African-American woman may hold a respected position as a college president but still face discrimination when trying to buy a house in a predominantly white neighbourhood. Therefore, according to a concept called 'intersectionality', it appears that social positions are not independent but rather interact to shape a person's experiences (Richardson & Loubier, 2008)(Bauer et al., 2021).

In the context of an organisation, it is important to look into the intersectionality of a workplace to be able to understand the complexity of women's experiences in male-dominated workplaces, as women who experience multiple forms of discrimination at once may face even greater challenges (Wright, 2016).

Nonetheless, having a numerical majority does not necessarily mean having power or control (McPhail, 2004). The same goes for the vice-versa, when not having a numerical majority does not mean lacking control. Research showed that the number of males present in the workplace did not noticeably impact male candidates' perception of power, even if they were in the minority. This could be due to the fact that men generally have a greater level of social power than women, leading them to assume they will maintain their power regardless of the gender composition of the leadership team (Goodwin et al., 2020).

There are notable differences between male- and female-dominated environment factors. If these differences are caused by the opposed natures each gender is associated with, and they reflect so deeply in all organisational aspects, then we could assume that they are propagated into the availability expectations as well. Based on the fact that women are believed to be more empathetic, understanding and caring (Eagly & Wood, 1987), we believe that the availability expectations outside business hours might be lower in female-dominated workplaces, as they could be more considerate towards colleagues and workers compared to the men working in highly competitive, male-dominated working environments.

H4: Availability expectations are lower in female-dominated workplaces than in male-dominated workplaces.

2.3   The Influence of Availability Expectations on Leadership Career Aspirations

2.3.1   Leadership and Why It Matters

Leadership is a widely discussed concept often cited as a key factor in driving change and achieving organisational objectives (Hughes, 2009). Throughout time, theorists, writers, historians and philosophers tried to define and explain leadership while looking at representative historical figures for guidance, by putting together a set of pre-defined attributes of a leader. Although it is common to associate the success or failure of an organisation with the behaviour of its leader, it is not accurate to reduce leadership to a set of personal traits. However, many contemporary authors continue to link leadership success to a specific personal virtue. Some recent books suggest that judgement, authenticity, credibility, honesty, likeability, or humility are the secrets to effective leadership (Allio, 2012).

While there is still no unified model of leadership, there are plenty of statements on leadership and its essence. A study that aggregates and analyses 17 definitions of leadership (spanned throughout more than a century) concludes that leadership is a process that involves influencing a group towards achieving a specific goal. The same study points out the essential features of leadership: leadership is a process, it is a way of influencing, it needs a group context, and it aims to accomplish a well-defined goal. It's noteworthy that even after 100 years, these defining characteristics of leadership remain relevant and consistent across different leadership theories (Ronald, 2014).

Leadership can be defined in various ways, but its fundamental meaning remains the same: it refers to the capacity to inspire and guide others towards achieving specific objectives. Understanding the characteristics and techniques necessary to effectively persuade others is crucial to comprehending leadership (Hughes, 2009). In the context of an organisation, leaders are expected to perform strategic management tasks such as defining purpose and values, charting a clear course of action, creating a sense of community, and driving change. They must establish a well-researched vision, develop a feasible strategy, create a focused plan, and implement it in a measurable manner. Additionally, they must continuously monitor the environment to improve it and to prepare for unexpected changes (Allio, 2012).

The concept of leadership has been intensively discussed and debated because it proved to be a vital force in driving the progress of an organisation. First and foremost, leadership is important because leaders have the responsibility to recognise and address the issues and difficulties faced by their stakeholders, including customers, investors, employees, and even the organisation itself (Ulrich & Smallwood, 2012).

The first aspect for leaders to take into account is assets, which they are undoubtedly responsible for. It is the duty of leaders to ensure the financial stability of their institutions, along with the connections and standing required to maintain that stability over time. Moreover, leaders are required to provide their organizations with the necessary services,

products, tools, and equipment that enable individuals within the organisation to be responsible and effective (DePree, 1990).

Several studies provide supporting and measurable evidence of the difference leadership actually makes in how well an organisation performs. Research that looks at how senior managers impact a company's financial success shows that CEOs account for 14% of the variation in firm performance, which is more than the 19% attributed to the industry sector. Additionally, high-performing leaders can add $25 million of value to an organisation during their tenure, compared to executives with average performance (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005).

As leadership is a concept emerging naturally in most groups, people tend to have an innate understanding of what leadership entails and what qualities a leader should possess. This implicit knowledge structure on leaders and leadership evolves through socialisation and past experiences with leaders. Regarding the perception of the followers upon leaders, research showed that, when subordinates interact with their actual leaders, they tend to rely on their preconceived notions of what a leader should be like, which are known as their leader prototypes. Essentially, people use these prototypes as a standard to compare with the actual leader in a matching process. This process, referred to as leader categorisation, plays a crucial role in determining the subordinates' perceptions of the leader, thus affecting their relationship (Quaquebeke et al., 2014).

From a scientific perspective, it is nearly impossible to identify and create a list of traits that guarantee successful leadership. The debate among management practitioners and theorists regarding the existence of an ideal leader cannot be answered unequivocally since there is no simple, universal recipe for success, nor is there a reliable and secure path to success or a set of universal characteristics for a manager-leader. However, the current trends of globalisation, liberalisation, internationalisation and digitalisation necessitate companies to alter their current methods of operation in order to survive in a competitive market (Glinkowska & Kaczmarek, 2017).

Lately, alongside the material aspect, the people aspect has gained more and more importance as an essential component of leadership and the organisation's culture. Without people, leadership becomes irrelevant. Leaders can choose to focus solely on leaving behind assets for their organisation (which in current times would make their leadership capabilities worth questioning), or they can strive to create a lasting impact. This impact should consider the qualitative aspects of life and provide meaning, challenge, and joy for those they lead (DePree, 1990). To be an effective leader, the main responsibility is to create a culture where individuals can come together with a shared sense of purpose. An increasing number of individuals are seeking to work on projects that make a difference in the world, as the workforce is becoming more purpose-driven (Achor et al., 2018). Therefore, it is required for leaders to be able to listen to the needs of their followers and to align company and employees' values. Communication is also vital for leaders since they must guide the direction of the organisation. They motivate and inspire their followers by sharing stories about the past, present, and future of the organisation, enabling them to find meaning in their work (Allio, 2012).

Especially given the digital era and the presence of a diverse, intricate workforce, it is essential for leaders to embrace a fresh approach to leadership. Recognising the complexities of leadership, it has been acknowledged that relying on a single perspective or dimension is insufficient. Given the increasing challenges in today's world, there is an urgent need for leadership theories that can adapt to swift changes, disruptive technological advancements, and the expansion of globalisation. This has led to a new era of leadership that moves away from traditional theories, which view leadership as a one-way, hierarchical process that divides leaders and followers. Instead, the focus is now on comprehending the complex dynamics between leaders, followers, situations, and the overall system, with particular attention given to unlocking the untapped leadership potential of followers (Benmira & Agboola, 2021).

Last but not least, another skill leaders should possess is being able to select potential leaders with proper traits of character, creativity, compassion, and motivation to achieve the goals of their organisations (Allio, 2012). Thus, leaders are responsible for nurturing future leaders in order to ensure the continuity of the leadership brand. While aiming to deliver long-term value, not just individual knowledge, skills, and principles are needed, but also a high quality of overall leadership capability throughout the organisation is required. 'Leaders matter, but over time, leadership matters more' (Ulrich & Smallwood, 2012). Otherwise stated, supporting new leadership development and building a culture of leadership consistent with the organisation's expectations is a key factor in the long-term strategy of an organisation (London & Sherman, 2021).

Empirical evidence indicates that organisations lacking vision and strategy tend to drift along, at the mercy of external forces (Allio, 2012). Thus, leadership matters because leaders have the capability to see the bigger picture that organisations are faced with at all times and make effective decisions that stir them towards successfully achieving their goals.

2.3.2 Different Styles of Leadership

Becoming a leader is a common career aspiration of managers (Allio, 2012). It is therefore important to make a distinction between leadership and management, or leaders and managers. While these terms are sometimes used interchangeably, there are ongoing discussions in some scientific communities about the significant differences between them (Ronald, 2014).

Both leaders and managers are the public representation of an organisation or company. Their abilities determine the marketing success and social development of the organisation to a significant extent. As per the general understanding, leadership is often equated with managerialism, with the leader being considered a 'smarter' manager (Glinkowska & Kaczmarek, 2017). However, there is a deeper difference between the two concepts: while managers concentrate on supervising day-to-day work and ensuring outputs meet standards ('building'), leaders prioritise the people involved and guide them towards achieving collective goals ('unfolding') (Barker, 2001).

Nowadays, managers who want to become leaders have access to a lot of advice, but much of it is based on unreliable evidence and personal experiences. Even leading academics do not agree on what leadership is or which practices are most effective. There are countless self-help books that suggest different types of leadership styles, while the media also provides many examples of successful leaders, but these examples may not apply to all situations (Allio, 2012).

What seems to be certain according to research is that, despite leadership being the ultimate goal of management education, attending school to acquire leadership skills cannot replace the value of practical experience. Potential leaders must therefore learn from real-life situations and practise their skills in a functional environment (Allio, 2012).

Moreover, to lead effectively, it is important to have a comprehensive understanding of various leadership styles that can be selected and adapted according to the specific needs of organizations, situations, groups, and individuals (Amanchukwu et al., 2015). Six main leadership styles have been identified and widely recognised throughout the literature on the matter:

- **Autocratic**: Autocratic leadership is a type of transactional leadership where leaders have complete power over their subordinates. It is efficient for making quick decisions but can lead to low morale and motivation among team members. Autocratic leadership is best used in crises where quick decisions need to be made without dissent (Amanchukwu et al., 2015).

- **Bureaucratic**: This is a style that emphasises strict adherence to rules and procedures, ensuring that employees follow them precisely. It is best suited for jobs with safety risks, where money is at stake, or for routine tasks. However, it is not effective for organizations that prioritise flexibility, creativity, or innovation (Amanchukwu et al., 2015).

41

- **Charismatic**: Charismatic leaders inspire and motivate their teams, resulting in increased enthusiasm and commitment, which is beneficial for productivity and goal attainment. However, over-reliance on the leader and overconfidence can lead to risks, such as the collapse of a project or organisation (Amanchukwu et al., 2015).

- **Democratic/Participative**: Democratic leaders involve team members in decision-making, resulting in higher engagement and job satisfaction. It also helps develop skills and motivation. However, it may not be suitable for crisis situations where speed and efficiency are critical, as it can be time-consuming and it can lead to lower quality input from team members lacking necessary knowledge or expertise (Amanchukwu et al., 2015).

- **Laissez-Faire**: Laissez-faire leadership style involves leaders who let their team members work independently, set their own deadlines, and make their own decisions while providing resources and advice. It can lead to high job satisfaction and increased productivity if the leader monitors performance and gives regular feedback. However, this style can be damaging if the team members lack the necessary skills, knowledge or time management. Thus, this is seen as one of the worst leadership styles (Amanchukwu et al., 2015).

- **Transactional**: The transactional leadership style is based on the assumption that team members accept the authority of their leader when they join a company and are compensated for their work and compliance. If the work does not meet an appropriate standard, the leader has the right to warn the team members. In this case, the relationship between staff and managers or leaders is based on a minimalistic transaction of effort for pay (Amanchukwu et al., 2015).

While the above-mentioned leadership styles rely on authority or reward systems to motivate employees, **transformational leadership** is a new leadership approach that involves leaders inspiring, motivating, and encouraging their followers to achieve higher levels of performance and success. This leadership theory is applied in situations where an organisation needs to be refreshed, is experiencing substantial changes, or necessitates a new direction. Transformational leadership has become particularly crucial in today's rapidly-evolving technology industry, where an organisation's innovation and adaptability degree can determine its success or failure (Benmira & Agboola, 2021). In addition to that, research has shown a positive correlation between transformational leadership and employee creativity, which is in line with previous studies indicating that followers tend to remain loyal and look up to a transformational leader for guidance in exploring new work frontiers. Additionally, studies imply that a leader's ongoing attention and care for their employees' socio-emotional needs are critical elements in fostering a more innovative work environment (Cheung & Wong, 2011).

For many years, the understanding of leadership has mainly been founded on research conducted on white men located in the United States. Nonetheless, both gender and culture have a tremendous impact on leadership and can moderate the relationship

between leadership behaviours and outcomes. Thus, leadership cannot be considered universal or narrowed down to a certain style, as it can vary depending on many factors, including gender or culture. For instance, a negative leader-member relationship has a greater negative effect on male leaders with female subordinates than on female leaders with male subordinates. Meanwhile, a transformational leadership style seems to be less effective for women leaders with male subordinates than for men leaders with female subordinates. Therefore, general leadership theories cannot be applied to all individuals equally because the implications of their gender and culture need to be considered (Ayman & Korabik, 2010).

2.3.3 Availability and Leadership

Generally, availability expectations rose due to the highly interconnected world, where modern work allows employees to work anytime and anywhere. Therefore, hybrid teams are formed, and they can either work in the same physical organisational space or in different places, being interconnected by means of ICT and thus being expected to be constantly available. Hybrid teams seem to be a convenient work setting, allowing people flexibility and being able to work while being separated. However, it also implies challenges, such as members being absent or unavailable, and unrealistic expectations regarding members' availability (Ocker et al., 2007).

In turn, leaders face availability expectations from their teams. A common perception followers have of leaders is that the latter need to work more and make themselves available around the clock. It is crucial to note that managerial careers are built around the concept of availability, starting with operational limitations like being 'on-call' at all times and extending to time-intensive duties. This emphasis on self-sacrifice appeared from a cultural perception of work that prioritises commitment and selflessness. In general, this highlights the significance of loyalty in corporate careers and the organisation's expectation of complete dedication. Particular research described that all high potential and senior managers work full time, and despite the legal limit of 35 working hours per week, most of them exceed this by working very long hours (Guillaume & Pochic, 2009).

Another reason for this requirement of extended availability could be the need for employees of supervisor support. In organisations, studies on leaders' support emphasise the importance of this support as a job resource for employees to function at their best. Theoretical frameworks that explore supervisor support as an available job resource primarily emphasise the advantages of having access to support and the negative outcomes of lacking such support. This highlights the crucial role that supervisors play in facilitating employees' work performance and well-being. However, it's important to note that this emphasis on supervisor support as a job resource can also lead to a perception that employees are passive receivers of support rather than active seekers of support (McIlroy et al., 2021).

As research has confirmed that the existence of a knowledge gap between employees and managerial teams leads to differing viewpoints on various matters (Sánchez-Vidal et al., 2012), we aim to find out if this is also the case with regard to the perception these groups have on leaders' availability. Therefore, we formulated our fifth hypothesis as follows:

H5: Leaders and employees without leadership responsibility differ in their perceptions about expected leaders' availability.

2.3.4 Female Leadership

Leadership has been defined in various ways by scholars, with some considering it as a trait, a set of skills, or a process. There are traditional and contemporary perspectives on leadership, with the former being transactional, hierarchical, and exclusive, while the latter is inclusive, empowering, and relational. Studies showed that women tend to view leadership as more collaborative than men, while men tend to perceive it as more hierarchical (Nahavandi et al., 1991).

Studies have exhibited that men and women adopt different leadership styles. Men typically approach leadership as a series of transactions with others, while women tend to be more transformational and utilise interpersonal skills to inspire followers rather than relying on power or authority. Research suggests that women use relational skills to influence others, promote participation, share power and information, and boost followers' self-esteem. Moreover, they tend to lead in a more democratic and participatory manner than men (Chandler, 2011).

As organisations become more diverse in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, and nationality, managing such multicultural structures can present challenges for leaders. These challenges arise from differences in cultural and work norms, language barriers, and additional time requirements for completing tasks. Therefore, leaders may need to implement new management methods and make different decisions to accommodate these diversities. Consequently, female leaders are emerging as key figures due to their empathy and flexibility, and their importance is increasing across all organisational levels. For them, effectiveness lies in being a protector and achieving results while also demonstrating consideration, care, and maintaining professionalism in a multicultural context (Girdauskiene & Eyvazzade, 2015).

Researchers developed a heuristic model of female leadership which describes female leaders as having high levels of employee involvement and possessing an entrepreneurial vision. They are capable of establishing effective communication with employees based on mutual respect and trust, and are motivating and inspiring, which results in better outcomes (Girdauskiene & Eyvazzade, 2015). More often than not, leadership centres around the quality of being trustworthy, which is typically gained through manifesting ethical and transparent behaviour in their actions (Hughes, 2009). Therefore, women seem to display the traits needed to be good leaders in the context of current organisational needs.

In addition to that, it was observed that female managers possess four key elements of transformational leadership: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, individual consideration, and intellectual stimulation (Girdauskiene & Eyvazzade, 2015). Research shows that the current organisational environment benefits from the transformational leadership style often adopted by women, as it enhances employee morale, motivation, and performance (Chisholm-Burns et al., 2017). Not only that, but numerous studies suggest that feminine characteristics are actually beneficial to transactional leadership (Richardson & Loubier, 2008), (Eagly et al., 2003), (Bilal et al., 2021), (Saint-Michel,

2018).

All these being considered, there is still a significant lack of female representation in leading positions. According to scholars, there are various reasons why this could occur. These reasons can be classified into two main categories: supply-side and demand-side factors. Supply-side factors impact the number of female candidates who apply for leading positions and include a scarcity of female role models in high-level professions. At the same time, the demand-side factors, which shape people's preferences for leadership, refer to the gender stereotypes that either the followers or the ones that appoint leaders have (Murray & Carroll, 2020).

Stereotypes depicting women as less competent leaders compared to men have persisted through the last three decades. According to separate research experiments, negative stereotypes of female leaders persist, and many people tend to associate management and leadership with males by default. However, it was shown that the impact of leadership initiatives is equally effective among male and female leaders (Richardson & Loubier, 2008).

Further and more recent leadership behaviour research offers further insights into the matter. A study analysing nine behaviours that enhance organisational performance discovered that women tended to use five of these behaviours more frequently than men: people development, role modelling, inspiration, expectation and rewards, and participative decision-making. In a survey of top executives, inspiration, expectation and rewards, participative decision-making, and intellectual stimulation were ranked as the most crucial elements for organisational performance. However, over 70% of the respondents of the same survey reported that their organisation's leadership lacked these behaviours, which is not surprising given the scarcity of women in leadership positions (Chisholm-Burns et al., 2017).

Since the 1970s, the emergence of women in leadership positions has been gradually changing as women's educational performance has increased. Although women hold 51% of all management and professional jobs in the U.S., only 14.4% of executive positions in Fortune 500 companies are held by women, and women's median earnings are lower than men's for the same jobs. Nonetheless, social and cultural forces such as globalisation and technology proliferation have opened up opportunities for women's leadership emergence, and women have taken advantage of these opportunities by utilising their unique leadership styles and qualities (Chandler, 2011).

Gender Stereotypes on Availability and Leadership

Leadership positions, as already stated in the previous chapters, require considerably more time and effort in order to reach the desired outcomes. To ensure successful results, leaders have to face overtime working hours and sacrifice personal life (Winston & Patterson, 2006).

But, male and female leaders encounter different work and family demands, and they have different needs in terms of time. It is already widely recognised that women have a

hard time balancing work and life aspects (Wattis et al., 2013), especially because, in alignment with societal expectations, they are also in charge of household duties (Eagly & Wood, 1987). In order to manage the dual roles that they have, women tend to choose jobs that either require fewer working hours or do not offer any further career advancements. Unfortunately, mothers with valuable skills decide not to advance in their careers anymore because high-position roles demand significant time that disturbs childcare duties. It gets even more difficult for working mothers to balance work and life because there is a shortage of available child daycare possibilities. Thus, they need to take responsibility and attend to the needs of their children, leading to an imbalance in the workforce. Even though women joined the workforce and have advanced careers, they have to combine work with home responsibilities (Wattis et al., 2013).

On one hand, leadership positions usually imply that individuals face longer working hours as well as the need to be available for work issues outside business hours (Guillaume & Pochic, 2009). Moreover, leaders have important responsibilities and need to make serious decisions in order to reach the targets they set. These may affect their work-life balance since they have to work during their leisure time, sacrificing their life outside their professional sphere (Yonjoo Cho et al., 2016). On the other hand, flexible working hours or part-time jobs allow women to better balance their personal and professional activities so that they have greater control over their lives, especially if they have children (Guillaume & Pochic, 2009). Therefore, the leadership requirements are contrary to women's needs concerning work-life balance.

So, leadership roles require time availability (Kuratko & Hornsby, 1999) and more effort beyond regular working hours (Guillaume & Pochic, 2009). With regard to this, new technologies provide individuals more freedom and allow them to be connected anytime and anywhere, ready to deal with work issues around the clock (Christin, 2015), especially when also considering flexible working (Borgkvist et al., 2021). This might come as an advantage, offering them increased freedom. However, the availability expectations are also higher (Christin, 2015). Since leaders already have to allocate more time to work responsibilities (Guillaume & Pochic, 2009), their availability expectations tend to increase even more due to technology and the possibility of being accessible whenever (Gillet et al., 2022).

Next, we want to analyse if gender plays a role in the perceptions leaders and non-leaders (in this case, the employees) have on the availability expectations.

H6: Male and female employees differ in their perceptions about expected leaders' availability.

Contextual Perceptions on Male and Female Leaders

As previously brought up, there are beliefs that claim that women have communal behaviour; namely, they are empathetic, selfless and compassionate, while men hold agentic traits, being ambitious, confident and powerful. These assumptions became so strong that they also developed in organisations and their culture. Leading roles are

perceived as being suitable for men only. This is a result of male characteristics, where individuals pursue careers in which they can exert controlling behaviour towards others. Therefore, this generates challenges for women when considering leadership (Eagly & Wood, 1987).

Since most workplaces tend to be male-dominated (Gaines, 2017), where men disproportionately hold the control and represent authority, it is easier for them to pursue high-level careers, considering that they hold, create and appreciate agentic behaviour (Eagly & Wood, 1987). It is not difficult for them to perform multi-tasking and prioritise their time (Nahavandi et al., 1991). Moreover, especially when there is an unequal distribution of childcare, it is mothers, and not fathers, who take on these duties (Melvin N. Wilson et al., 1990), which makes it even more accessible for men to climb the career ladder. Not only that stereotypical judgement is reinforced but also further assumptions that women are unfit for leadership positions are made (M. S. Jones & Solomon, 2019).

Workplaces that encourage competition and determination come as a result of men's competitive traits and stereotypical behaviour (Hartman & Barber, 2019), and there is a tendency in men to show higher self-confidence when they are reminded of their power (Reuben et al., 2010). However, if women in leadership positions adopt similar behaviour as their male counterparts, they experience offensive remarks, such as 'dragon lady'. Women should, therefore, not show agentic behaviour because this only leads to more discrimination against them. For instance, when female leaders show characteristics that are usually perceived as masculine, i.e. competition, they are assumed to deviate from the traditional gender roles. These deviations bring along negative responses (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Furthermore, women that succeed in traditionally male-dominated jobs may not be appreciated. One reason could be the fact that successful females lack traditionally female traits. Research shows that during an experiment, women were more likeable if there was existing information that showed successful women as behaving according to the communal characteristics. Nevertheless, this was only the case when there was evident information showing communal traits (Heilman & Okimoto, 2007).

Moreover, women are seen as more unlikable if they do not follow gender norms. Women have to face a hard time when pursuing leadership positions and while carrying out these roles (Eagly & Wood, 1987). In addition to this, the flexible work arrangement that women need for their work-life balance (Borgkvist et al., 2021) and the time availability that high position roles require (Guillaume & Pochic, 2009) contribute to the beliefs that women are less suitable for high positions and they are rather appropriate for household duties and childcare.

Due to the societal beliefs, organisational cultures (Eagly & Wood, 1987), and time availability expectations (Kuratko & Hornsby, 1999) that these roles imply, the external assumptions on male and female leaders vary.

Personal Perceptions on Male and Female Leaders

Stereotypical beliefs, societal expectations and the leadership implications are expected to induce women to self-describe themselves as being unfit to pursue and carry out high-level position roles (Bosak & Sczesny, 2008). Unfortunately, these beliefs affect women to such an extent that they take actions to become invisible by dressing up more like men, therefore not showing their true personalities (Goffee & Jones, 2015). An interesting point of view is whether women's self-perception influences how suitable they see themselves for leading roles (Bosak & Sczesny, 2008).

Leaders are presented as being agentic, implying that rather men are suitable for this role, while women consider themselves to have opposite characteristics. These ideas are learned in society as well as in schools and media (Bosak & Sczesny, 2008). Therefore, it is just a matter of time until women internalise these and consider that they do not hold traits that fit the required ones (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Besides this, women that already learned how to behave according to the traditional female ways assume that they will not be successful in traditional male careers. Female workers might possibly change their opinions and view themselves as fitting for leadership positions if they could receive a boost from female role models (Bosak & Sczesny, 2008). However, this might be difficult since there is a lack of mentors and role models (Chisholm-Burns et al., 2017).

In comparison to women, men tend to perceive themselves as suitable for high-level positions as they hold the required qualifications. In the meantime, women assume they lack the needed skills (Bosak & Sczesny, 2008), as a result of the internalisation of stereotypes and the additional discrimination they face if they behave differently than expected (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

There are studies that show considerable discrepancies in how males and females self-evaluated themselves with regard to their perceived levels of agentic traits (leadership competence, assertiveness). Women had a tendency in rating themselves lower than their male correspondents, as it can be also noticed in Figure 2.3 (Hentschel, 2019).
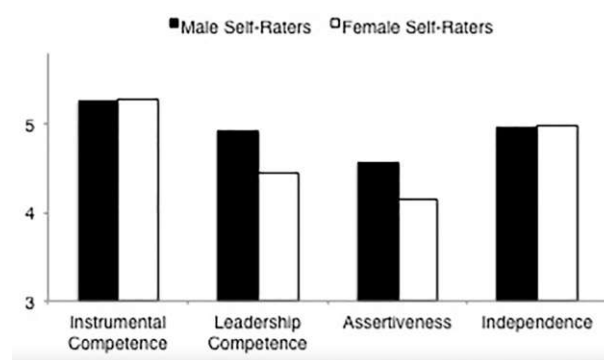

Figure 2.3: Ratings of agentic traits by male and female self-raters
(Hentschel, 2019)

To broaden the perspective on availability expectations and their impact on career aspirations, we propose exploring it with regard to the leadership positions, the work-life balance demands and challenges that women face when pursuing high-level positions.

H7: Male and female leaders differ in their perceptions about expected leaders' availability.

Gendered Career Aspirations Due to Availability Expectation

As previously mentioned, women who aspire to leading positions often face challenges that go beyond stereotypes and barriers (Hill et al., 2016). In addition to these, time-related demands that women have, i.e. part-time jobs and flexible working hours (Borgkvist et al., 2021), contribute to the difficulties of reaching high-level positions. While these adjustments are essential for females to achieve work-life balance, they are opposite to the requirements of leadership positions (Guillaume & Pochic, 2009).

Career advancement is strongly linked to extended working hours because of the perception that those employees who can dedicate more time to work are more committed. They engage in full-time jobs and are willing to start their working days earlier and extend their working hours beyond their regular hours. Moreover, such employees also do not allow their personal life to affect work and are more likely to be rewarded with promotions (Guillaume & Pochic, 2009).

Individuals holding high-level roles have a different relationship with work time as their workload and availability has increased. Furthermore, in most organisations, both men and women are expected to follow the same working schedule, even though it may not be fair towards women. Studies found that there are three strategies used by women to cope with this, but all of them imply some sort of compromise (Guillaume & Pochic, 2009).

1. The first approach involves women seeking high careers and working long hours. They attempt to reach leadership roles until they turn 40. But, this suggests that young women need to delay starting a family and having children. **It implies that they should first build their careers and then consider family and maternity leave**.

   Moreover, mothers, single women, and very few married ones that hold leadership positions adopt this plan because they had to follow standards that are associated with men. This implies that female leaders had to hire women for their household duties. However, they still ended up doing house chores as well. Furthermore, leaders have the possibility to often put in more hours because they are also highly paid and afford therefore to hire babysitters or cleaning ladies.

   In addition to this, women who make such compromises are also quite severe. They have requirements from their male and female employees to follow their pattern. The are two reasons behind this. The first one refers to the fact that they consider it common to have this assertive behaviour. The second one is related to them not

wanting to receive special treatment because it could make them appear incapable (Guillaume & Pochic, 2009).

2. The second approach is quite different from the first one. **The main focus is on the work-life balance and family activities, by adapting the work schedule to fit private life.** These arrangements are usually considered by mothers and involve having either part-time jobs or a schedule with fixed working hours. Many female leaders took advantage of such work adjustments. However, it may cause a negative impact on them, because it may be hard for organisations to believe that these are only short-time adjustments and women will resume their employment and consider full-time schedules again.

   Therefore, choosing part-time jobs can negatively affect women's careers because it is against the beliefs of working outside regular hours and career advancements. So, female employees realise that their part-time requirements only impede their promotion. This affects women's stigma and leads them to abandon their careers and prioritise family life (Guillaume & Pochic, 2009).

3. The third approach proposes a new solution meant to assist female leaders who have children and aspire to a successful career and family life. **These women have full-time jobs, they split household duties with their partners, and they try to prioritise their career advancements.** They also invest time in their children's education and choose not to use their leisure time for house chores.

   To balance women's career and family aspirations, male partners need to equally offer their support with regard to family. *'Flexible availability'* is a term that refers to effectively establishing working hours and concentrating on abilities, accomplishments and outcomes. However, women have to carefully organise their schedules to align with their children's activities. This involves that they have to carry out their tasks during the early and late parts of the day. Furthermore, they need to make significant use of ICT and their phones in trying to cope with time availability requirements.

   Fathers started to adopt this way of working, too, as they need to offer their help so that mothers could also focus on their careers and aspirations. However, this pattern is popular only in societies where men and women have similar perceptions of how to deal with work and life (Guillaume & Pochic, 2009).

People hold and guide themselves after certain beliefs and preconceptions with regard to which careers are suitable for men and women. These stereotypes negatively impact women because both genders tend to take these as guidelines and behave accordingly (Eagly & Wood, 1987). Therefore female employees have lower self-confidence and doubt that their capabilities are appropriate for traditionally male-dominated fields (Hartman & Barber, 2019). Not only do they get discouraged but also face barriers to reaching high positions (Hill et al., 2016); therefore, they lower their career aspirations (Bosak & Sczesny, 2008).

Moreover, leaders have the possibility nowadays to closely control how much time is spent by their employees on work tasks by means of ICT. This makes it difficult for female workers to meet the expectation of being an 'ideal worker' (Kalev & Deutsch, 2018) since they are struggling with work and private life (Guillaume & Pochic, 2009). This leads to women being perceived as unfit for positions they are qualified for or drives them to pursue lower-paid jobs. They assume that they will not be able to balance job requirements with family.

Men and women have different career aspirations shaped by stereotypical beliefs, as we discussed in the first sections. These aspirations are also impacted by the need to be available, especially in leading roles since these positions require longer working hours. Having an extensive work schedule has become increasingly important to stand out and be selected for high-position roles. For women who have to balance out professional and family life, this comes at the cost of making additional compromises (Guillaume & Pochic, 2009).

H8: Different career aspirations between men and women are impacted by the perceived need of being available.

CHAPTER 3

Methods

3.1 Data Collection

While it is important to create a strong literature base, it is also essential to use the right approach to collect the data and apply suitable analysis tools to test the hypotheses. It is of great significance to use the correct research design and data collection instruments to obtain relevant results that allow drawing robust conclusions. The main method we used consisted of conducting a survey study which was part of a vignette study. A quantitative vignette study consists of two components: a vignette experiment as the core element and a traditional survey for the parallel and supplementary measurement of additional respondent-specific characteristics. Vignette studies use short descriptions of situations or persons (vignettes) that are usually shown to respondents within surveys in order to elicit their judgements about these scenarios (Atzmüller & Steiner, 2010). For the purpose of our thesis, we only used questions that captured the quantitative aspect of the data. These questions can be found in the appendix section of this thesis (4.4).

Our study was completed in collaboration with the developers of 'Smart-Working' (a cooperation project of the Institut für Höhere Studien (IHS), the Institut für Managementwissenschaften der Technischen Universität Wien (TU Wien), and the Österreichische Institut für Familienforschung (ÖIF) at Universität Wien). As the topic of our research was integrated under the umbrella of a bigger study carried out by the 'Smart Working' team, we collaborated on developing the survey, whereas our main task was the technical implementation and maintenance of the questionnaire using the platform 'Unipark'. Unipark is a web-based survey software that supported us in designing and distributing the survey among participants and then centralising the collected data.

We started out by making a survey for pre-testing purposes, which allowed us to see the way in which the questionnaire is generally perceived by the participants. This was available in both German and English, and it was tested with over 180 participants who

had the possibility not just to reply to the survey questions but also to give feedback to the questionnaire itself on each page of the survey.

The 16 vignette scenarios we used for this pre-testing phase were in the form of various short videos (provided to us by a third party) depicting four different scenes. All scenes portrayed a circumstance in which a family is spending time together doing a certain activity after the main character finished working: eating dinner, cooking together, playing cards or booking a family vacation. The activity is brutally interrupted by a phone call from a work colleague regarding work-related issues, to which the main character needs to decide whether to answer or not. The video ends with the main character not taking the call, regardless of whether the partner is supportive or not. The survey participants need then to state what they would have done if they were confronted with such a situation.

Therefore, in Unipark, we ended up creating scenarios in both English and German. Also, we added a few check-up questions to verify how carefully the participants understood the situational context, as well as questions related to their demographics, career aspirations, workplace and availability expectations. These items were based on existing surveys used in similar research.

For the final version, we decided to leave out two out of the four scenes, because the people testing the survey suggested it took too long to complete. This would have led to the respondents losing their patience and providing inaccurate answers towards the end. We, therefore, decided to keep only the scenes in which we believed that taking a phone call from work would make the most impact: the family having dinner together and the family playing cards.

Having adapted the survey accordingly, we proceeded to do a pilot test that ran between December 2022 and February 2023, which gathered 269 voluntary participants. Through this experiment, we checked once more the coherence of the survey and the willingness of the participants to fill it out. The data set was used to check the relevance of the data and the intermediate results.

3.2 Participants

The final version of the survey was sent out to over 1200 participants who had to be employees over the legal working age, working a total amount of minimum of 20 hours per week. These eliminatory criteria were established to ensure that participants possess the experience they need in order for their answers to be relevant to our aim. Individuals who filled out the survey are living in Austria. The input used for the purpose of this thesis was collected in March 2023.

Our study involved a total of 1216 participants (before data cleaning) coming from public as well as private sectors or non-profit organisations. Of the total sample, 51,6% were men and 48,4% were women, with an average age of 44 years old. The majority of participants had completed a vocational education school (39,5%) or bachelor's degree or higher (30,7%), while the remaining participants had a high school diploma or equivalent, as shown in Figure 3.1.

The participants were recruited through the online platform *Bilendi & respondi* and were offered a monetary incentive for completing the survey. Bilendi is a digital market research company that provides services to businesses and organisations interested in collecting data from a specific target audience. Bilendi handles the recruitment and management of individuals who participate in market research surveys and works with them to ensure they are reliable and representative of the target audience (Billendi Official Website, 2023).

The participants had the option to exit the questionnaire throughout the whole time. In accordance with the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the personal information of participants was recorded, stored and evaluated anonymously. All data collected in the study is being kept strictly confidential and will continue to be used for research and educational purposes by the participating research organisations.
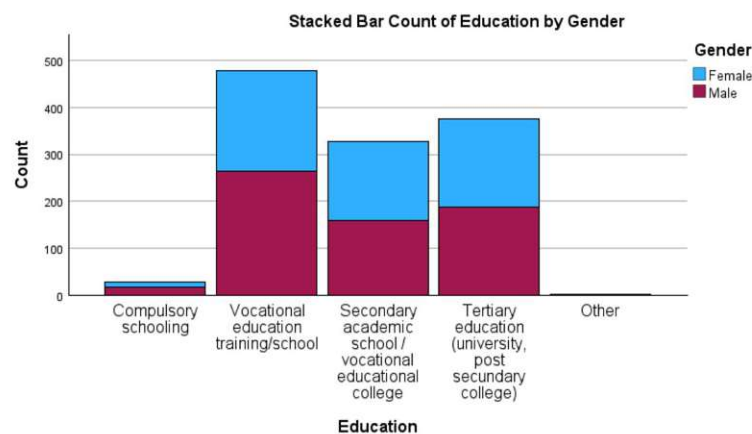

Figure 3.1: Level of education by gender

3.3   Measures

The study used a self-report survey to collect data on participants' attitudes and behaviours related to career aspirations and availability expectations. All survey items were based on existing literature and have been used before in various studies. The survey consisted of several sections, including demographic information, a vignette questionnaire (described in Chapter 3.1), and constructs related to leadership aspirations and availability expectations.

Career Aspirations

Professional aspirations were assessed using three items. Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with statements about their desirability of advancing in their career on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). A sample item is: 'I hope to become a leader in my career field.' (Gregor & O'Brien, 2016). In the analysis below, you will find this variable under the name of 'Career aspirations'.

Availability Expectations Outside Business Hours

We were interested in measuring participants' input regarding availability expectations outside business hours from three different angles: their personal willingness to carry out work-related tasks after business hours, their supervisors' expectations of them to do so and their opinion on whether leaders should have extended availability based on their higher role.

First, we tried to assess participants' *perspective with regard to themselves having to be available outside working hours.* This was done through a couple of direct questions that were addressed to them immediately after watching the vignette scenario. The video really helped them immerse themselves in the specific situation in which a main character receives a call from work during a leisurely evening of family activities. The main character eventually chose to ignore the call. Given the whole context, the survey respondents needed to select, on a 7-point Likert scale, if they agreed or disagreed with the action of the main character.

Hence, for assessing participants' 'Willingness to be available' in the context of the vignette, we believe that a single item is enough to form a correct judgement on how participants feel about having to be available for work-related matters during their leisure time.

Secondly, the individuals were asked *if their supervisor expects them to be available outside business hours.* For this, we used two items, both of which used a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). For example, they had to asses if, in general, the supervisor expects them to be available when they are not physically present at work. Further on, we proceeded by using the mean of these items, which we called 'Availability expectations'.

56

Lastly, we wanted to capture their thoughts on the *expected engagement of an ideal leader*. Here, the participants needed to evaluate, on the same 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), if they believe leaders should themselves be available outside working hours. 'The ideal leader' variable was then used to measure people's perception of the degree of availability desired from a leader.

Leadership position

Individuals were asked whether or not they hold a *leadership position* in their current job, having the option to choose between multiple categories (being a leader either in a formalised or in a non-formalised way, not being a leader but aiming to become one or not being a leader and not wanting to become one in the future). A distinction needed to be made between formal and informal leaders because many people working in teams hold leading positions such as 'team lead', but are actually not formally recognised as leaders from the organisational point of view. Next, when we talk about leaders, we refer only to those that officially occupy a leading role (to which we attributed the value '1' for testing purposes), while the term 'employee' defines those participants that are neither formal nor informal leaders (the assigned value is '0').

Gender distribution in the workplace

The *workplace gender distribution* was measured in percentages in terms of female-male distribution in the participants' place of work. Participants could choose between 6 options, one of them being a balanced environment and another one 'I don't know'. Environments, where one of the two genders was present in a proportion of at least 90%, were considered to be gender-dominated.

Demographics

Of interest to us regarding the *demographics* of the participants was their gender. Other information such as having kids or not, were also collected, but only used in the exploratory phase.

3.4 Strategy

3.4.1 Data Preparation

As mentioned, the data set that we used was collected through Unipark, which provided us with the possibility to download the data set in a format suitable for IBM SPSS, the tool used further for processing. First and foremost, the data set was cleaned and prepared to ensure that it was ready for analysis. Then, we proceeded to run the necessary test that would allow us to draw conclusions based on the data.

The tool used to conduct the statistical analyses and test the hypotheses of this study was IBM SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). This is a widely-used tool for statistical analysis, which provides a variety of functions to manage, analyse and visualise data sets (IBM, 2022).

We utilised IBM SPSS to carry out a set of statistical analyses, such as descriptive statistics and checking the distribution of the data set. These results were used to test the hypotheses and to generate an understanding of the research question.

Once we imported the data into the tool, we applied relevant statistical methods. This includes choosing the appropriate methods from the menu and specifying the relevant variables to run the desired tests. The tool created then output files that comprised the results of the analyses. Based on these outcomes that we interpreted, we could find relevant findings and draw the conclusions stated in the results chapter.

3.4.2 Data Cleaning

Since the data set we used is the result of a data collection process designed by us specifically for the purpose of this research, we did not need to conduct extensive data cleaning. Nonetheless, we thoroughly analysed the quality of the answers, and based on some established rules, we eliminated those answers that turned out inaccurate.

To ensure higher accuracy of the data, an additional quality check was implemented in order to distinguish between human and possible bots participants. The verification was carried out by asking the participants to perform simple actions (e.g. 'Please click on the current calendar month.'). This was done in such a way that, whoever did not manage to respond to one of the questions correctly, got redirected to the end of the survey, thus not being allowed to complete it in the first place. In order to make sure that the filtering was performed correctly, in addition to the quality check filtering, we manually checked that all the registered answers had correctly passed the quality check questions.

Eliminating Unused Columns

- When designing the survey, we introduced a few variables meant to help us identify the origin of the survey respondents. However, we did not need to use those for the purpose of our thesis, thus, we removed the respective columns from the data set.

Eventually, we ended up with 293 variables representing demographic data about participants, as well as their answers to the vignette questions. From these 293 variables, we only kept the columns that were relevant for our analysis, containing the items stated in the measures' chapter.

- **Reliability Analysis**
  Our survey had multiple items for measuring concepts such as career aspiration or availability expectations. After performing the reliability checks, we removed from the data set an item that was used to collect data on the participants' career aspirations and decided to keep the two similar items that stored data on the availability expectations based on their α.

  Cronbach's α shows the average value of the reliability coefficients that are obtained for all possible combinations of items when split into two half-tests. Usually, when checking this value, it highly depends on the study, research question and hypotheses. However, if α's values are between 0.70 and 0.80, the items are believed to be consistent. Namely, they are closely related and can be further used in the analysis. The reliability analysis provides in the output the value of overall α, and also its values if the items would be removed. Based on these outcomes, one decides which items should be included in the data analysis to ensure reliability (Andy Field, 2009).

  We used in the survey three items to measure the career aspirations of the participants. Therefore, in order to check their reliability and make sure that the items within the questionnaire are consistent, we used reliability checks and considered Cronbach's α value for it. For our tests, we only included two of them because of the outcomes of the reliability analysis. Hence, we ensured that the items we used were reliable and that consistency among them was achieved.

Eliminating Outliers (Rows)

- Subjects that took less than 300 seconds to complete the survey were removed from the data set (3 individuals). This was based on the consideration that, only watching the two videos alone (70 seconds each), the participants would not have had time (physically) to actually read through the other questions and provide real answers.

- In contrast, we decided to keep the participants whose completion time was longer than 2000 seconds (7 participants), as we expect them to have filled out the survey during working hours when other tasks might have been prioritised. In addition to that, we checked the answers individually, and all subjects provided valuable input for the open-answer questions, which stands as proof of their answer's validity.

- Next, we needed to decide whether to keep or eliminate the participants whose survey completion duration was registered as -1. In this case, we had to understand what the value means, as this is not defined by us or by the data collection

platform. It seemed that the -1 value is recorded in the data set in the survey completion column when the platform was not able to record the time taken by those participants to complete the survey. This could be the cause of a poor internet connection, technical issues or even atypical participant behaviour (for instance, some respondents might have spent a lot of time on one page without answering any questions, or they might have opened multiple tabs during the survey). For these cases (<10), we performed a visual inspection of the individual answers and then decided to keep all of them. In Figure 3.2, we can see an overview of the time participants took to complete the survey.
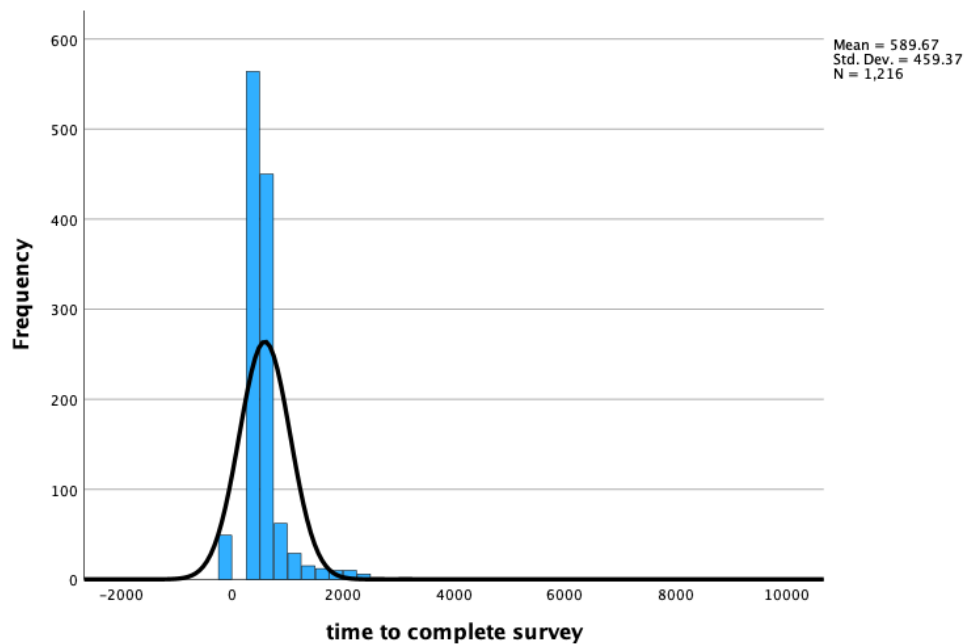

Figure 3.2: Time participants took to complete the survey

- As one of our items gave the respondents the possibility to fill out manually a personalised response (that was now available among the possible answers provided by us), we decided to leave them out only when testing the hypothesis where this item was used. The other answers (columns) of these entries were used for the rest of the process.

- When looking into the education column, we noticed that some people filled out the 'Other' option with answers that were already defined in the pre-defined answer options. For these 7 cases, we manually assigned the correct education level in the data set.

3.4.3 Statistical Tests

In the upcoming section, we will provide an introduction to the statistical methods that we used in our data analysis, along with the reason why we considered them.

Since our data set has more than 1000 participants, we considered it as being an increased size sample and according to the Central Limit Theory (CLT), we conducted our data analysis based on the assumption that the data set is normally distributed, using therefore parametric tests.

CLT is a statistical argument that states that if the sample size from a population is large enough and the variance is finite, then the mean of the sample is expected to be close to the mean of the whole population. Furthermore, if the used sample has an increased size, it tends to take a bell-shaped normal distribution. Moreover, their variances become similar to the variance of the entire population (Andy Field, 2009).

Independent T-Test

The independent t-test is usually applied when wanting to compare the means between two different groups for a continuous variable. More specifically, it is used to check whether there is a statistically significant difference between the groups (Andy Field, 2009). During our data analysis, we will observe mostly the different career aspirations and availability expectations across gender, therefore, this test is useful.

In order to use an independent t-test, there are a few assumptions that need to be considered. The dependent variable needs to be continuous, while the independent one should be categorical. There should be no relationship between the subjects. Otherwise, the p-value is not reliable anymore. Additionally, the data set should have a normal distribution (Andy Field, 2009).

Moderation Analysis

Moderation analysis is a technique used to explore how the relationship between two variables changes under different conditions. It allows us to determine whether the impact of an independent variable on a dependent variable is different depending on the value of a third variable. The third variable, called moderator, acts as an intermediary and can either strengthen or weaken the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The method provides a better understanding of the relationship between the variables and identifies potential aspects that may influence the relationship (Hair et al., 2021).

3.5   Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Tables

Before proceeding with analysing the data needed for testing our hypotheses, we first wanted to take a closer look at the variables and how they relate to one another. This step is done by performing descriptive statistics on our variables of interest and generating correlation tables that show the strength and direction of the relationship between variables. In order to perform a correct variable analysis, we first determined which variables we wanted to analyse and whether they were categorical or continuous.

Through descriptive statistics, we aim to summarise the data and describe its main features, such as measures of central tendency (mean) and measures of dispersion (variance, standard deviation). This helped us gain a general overview of the data and identify potential patterns or outliers that are later tackled in the discussion chapter.

Generally, descriptive statistics can also be used to identify any issues with the data, such as missing values or extreme values that could affect the validity of our results. However, this is not the case for us since the data was collected in a controlled manner.

The descriptive statistics for the four continuous variables are presented in Table 3.1.

Item	Statistics	Male	Female
Career Aspirations	Mean	3.56	2.99
	Median	3.50	3.00
	Std. Dev.	1.86	1.80
Willingness to be Available	Mean	3.04	2.95
	Median	3.00	3.00
	Std. Dev.	1.78	1.67
Availability Expectations	Mean	3.07	3.09
	Median	3.00	3.00
	Std. Dev.	1.70	1.82
Ideal Leader	Mean	3.95	3.80
	Median	4.00	4.00
	Std. Dev.	1.58	1.62

Table 3.1: Descriptive statistics - continuous variables

The mean and median were calculated to provide a measure of central tendency. Most

participants, regardless of gender, disagreed with the fact that in their team, employees are expected to be available outside of business hours. Interestingly, there is a difference in the average career aspirations between men and women, with men tending to have higher aspirations. However, both genders seem to share the belief that a leader should not be required to be reachable outside of working hours. When asked to rate their own willingness to be available outside their schedule, the majority of both men and women expressed an unwillingness to be reachable. Additionally, both men and women tend to agree that their supervisors do not expect them to work beyond their scheduled hours.

The standard deviation was used to measure the amount of dispersion or variability in the data. The values of standard deviation indicate that the responses are relatively tightly clustered around the mean value, with only a small amount of variation.

Table 3.2 shows the workplace gender distribution. Most female employees work in a workplace with an equal gender distribution, while a significant percentage are engaged in a female-dominated workplace. Only a few participants work in a male-dominated workplace. Furthermore, the majority of male employees have a job in a workplace with an even mix of men and women. A significant percentage also work in male-dominated environments, while very few participants are engaged in predominantly female workplaces.

Gender	Male		Female	
Item	N	%	N	%
Far more men than women (>90% men)	109	17.4	38	6.5
Mostly men (60% - 90% men)	193	30.9	98	16.7
An even mix of men and women (40% - 60%)	227	36.3	214	36.5
Mostly women (60% - 90% women)	76	12.2	132	22.5
Far more women than women (>90% women)	8	1.3	85	14.5
I don't know	12	1.9	19	3.2
Total	625	100.0	586	100.0

Table 3.2: Descriptive statistics - workplace gender distribution

Conducting a correlation analysis allowed us to explore the relationship between the continuous variables and to gain valuable insights into how they associate with one another, as shown in 3.3.

Item	Statistics	Career aspirations	Availability expectations	Ideal leader	Willingness to be available
Career Aspirations	Pearson Correlation Sig.	1	0.21 <0.001	0.14 <0.001	0.20 <0.001
Availability Expectations	Pearson Correlation Sig.	0.21 <0.001	1	0.36 <0.001	0.38 <0.001
Ideal Leader	Pearson Correlation Sig.	0.14 <0.001	0.36 <0.001	1	0.54 <0.001
Willingness to be available	Pearson Correlation Sig.	0.20 <0.001	0.38 <0.001	0.54 <0.001	1

Table 3.3: Bi-variate correlation between continuous variables

The analysis shows that there are positive relationships between career aspirations, availability expectations, individuals' perceptions on whether leaders should work longer hours than employees, and individuals' willingness to be available outside their working schedule. The outcome suggests that people that aspire higher in their careers are more expected of their leaders to be available outside working hours. Furthermore, individuals with high career aspirations also have a slightly increased willingness to put in more hours at work. There is also a positive relationship between leaders' expectations of their employees to be available for longer hours and both people's perceptions that leaders should work longer hours and employees' willingness to work outside their schedules. This result indicates that workers whose leaders have higher expectations of them to be available around the clock also tend to be more willing to work longer working hours themselves. Furthermore, they also believe that leaders should be more available in comparison to employees. The analysis also implies that there is a correlation between individuals' perceptions that leaders should be available longer hours and their willingness to adopt the same behaviour. This suggests that those employees who expect more from their leaders also tend to be more willing to work longer hours.

Further, we were interested in checking the correlation between the same variables but across gender, as presented in Table 3.4. Nonetheless, the results are similar to the ones in the previous table. However, women have slightly decreased correlation values in comparison to men, except for the correlation between individuals' willingness to be available and their opinion on whether an ideal leader should be available for longer working hours.

Item	Career aspirations	Availability expectations	Ideal leader	Willingness to be available
Career Aspirations	1	*0.18* **	*0.13* **	*0.19* **
Availability Expectations	**0.24** **	1	*0.38* **	*0.38* **
Ideal Leader	**0.13** **	**0.35** **	1	*0.56* **
Willingness to be available	**0.21** **	**0.39** **	**0.52** **	1

Table 3.4: Bi-variate correlation between continuous variables across gender; results for female participants are in *italic* and for male in **bold**
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

3.6 Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1

H1: Women have different career aspirations than men.

An independent t-test was conducted to compare the career aspirations across male and female participants. There were 586 female participants and 625 male participants. For this, we used the mean value of the career aspirations items that were measured on a Likert scale and the gender of the participants.

There were significant differences ($t(1209) = $ -5.45, $p < 0.001$) in scores with the mean value for men ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 1.86$), this was higher than the mean value for women = ($M = 2.99$, $SD = 1.80$). The magnitude of the differences in the means (means difference = -0.57, 95% CI: - 0.78 to - 0.37) was significant. Hence, H1 was supported; men and women do have different career aspirations.

Hypothesis 2

H2: In a male-dominated workplace, women have lower career aspirations.

Furthermore, another independent t-test was conducted to compare the career aspirations of male and female participants in a male-dominated workplace. Before conducting the test, the data set was changed so that it only contained participants working in a male-dominated environment, resulting in 109 men and 38 women. Then, for the test, we used the mean value of career aspirations items that were measured on a Likert scale and the gender of the participants, where '1' stands for women and '2' for men.

There were no significant differences ($t(145) = $ -1.31, $p = 0.19$) in scores for men ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 1.93$) and women = ($M = 3.22$, $SD = 1.81$). The magnitude of the differences in the means (means difference = -0.47, 95% CI: -1.18 to 0.24) was very small. Hence, H2 was not supported. There is no considerable difference in career aspirations between men and women in a male-dominated environment.

Hypothesis 3

H3: Women are less willing to be available outside working hours than men.

For this hypothesis, we used two different measures for the willingness of participants to be available outside of working hours. These measures represent their responses to direct questions that followed the video. One measure was ordinal, while the other was nominal, so we conducted two separate tests to examine both variables and provide better insights.

An independent t-test was conducted to compare the willingness to be available between genders. The ordinal variable was used, where we first calculated the mean value of participants' responses, which were on a Likert scale. The gender of the participants was also included in the analysis, with '1' representing women and '2' representing men.

The results of the test did not yield a statistically significant difference ($t(1209)$ = -0.90, $p = 0.37$) in scores for men ($M = 3.04$, $SD = 1.78$) and women = ($M = 2.95$, $SD = 1.67$), failing to support our hypothesis that there is a difference in their willingness to be available outside working hours. The degree of discrepancy in the means (means difference = -0.09, 95% CI: -0.28 to 0.11) was very small. Hence, H3 was not supported.

Hypothesis 4

H4: Availability expectations are lower in female-dominated workplaces than in male-dominated workplaces.

To compare the availability expectations that leaders have towards their employees, we conducted another independent t-test. We included the workplace gender distribution and the mean value of two variables that measured the availability expectations.

Again, there were no significant differences ($t(238)$ = -1.23, $p = 0.22$) in scores for male-dominated environments ($M = 3.22$, $SD = 1.78$) and female-dominated workplaces = ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 1.99$). The differences in means between the groups were found to be minimal (mean difference = - 0.30 and a 95% CI: ranging from -0.79 to 0.18). Therefore, H4 is rejected. There is no considerable difference in availability expectations between gender-dominated workplaces.

Hypothesis 5

H5: Leaders and employees without leadership responsibility differ in their perceptions about expected leaders' availability.

Moreover, we further evaluated the perceptions about expected leaders' availability by comparing employees' with leaders' opinions.

The results of the independent t-test revealed a statistically significant difference ($t(914)$ = -3.74) between leaders and non-leaders, supporting our hypothesis that they differ in their perceptions about expected leaders' availability. The mean score of participants that hold a leading position ($M = 4.23$, $SD = 1.56$) was significantly higher than the mean score of employees without leadership responsibility ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 1.61$) with a p-value of less than the designated alpha level ($p < 0.001$), indicating that the difference between the groups (means difference = -0.48, 95% CI: -0.73 to -0.23) is unlikely to have occurred by chance. Therefore, H5 is supported; leaders and non-leaders have different perceptions regarding availability expectations. In comparison to employees without leading responsibilities, leaders rather agree with the fact that they should put in more working hours.

Hypothesis 6

H6: Male and female employees differ in their perceptions about expected leaders' availability.

After checking the perceptions of male and female leaders regarding their availability expectations, we tested if there is a difference in perceptions among male and female non-leaders.

The outcome of the independent t-test showed that there were no significant differences ($t(715) = $ -0.96, $p = 0.34$) in scores for male employees ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 1.62$) and female employees = ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 1.61$). The differences in means between the groups were very small (mean difference = - 0.12 and a 95% CI: ranging from -0.36 to 0.12). Therefore, H6 is not supported. Male and female employees do not have different perceptions with regard to expected leaders' availability.

Hypothesis 7

H7: Male and female leaders differ in their perceptions about expected leaders' availability.

Furthermore, we were interested in whether gender affects the perceptions of leaders about their availability expectations. To test this hypothesis, we conducted another independent t-test. The data set was changed so that it only contained male and female individuals with leading roles.

Interestingly, there were very small discrepancies ($t(200) = $ -0.81, $p = 0.42$) in scores for male leaders ($M = 4.29$, $SD = 1.53$) and female leaders = ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 1.63$) with regard to the perceptions of their availability. The observed differences in the means (means difference = -0.19, 95% CI: -0.66 to 0.28) were quite small. Therefore, the hypothesis is not supported: gender is not an influential factor when considering a leader's availability expectation.

Hypothesis 8

H8: Different career aspirations between men and women are impacted by the perceived need to be available.

A moderation analysis was conducted to check whether the relationship between the expectations with regard to leaders' availability and career aspirations was moderated by gender. The independent variable was the availability expectations variable, while the dependent variable was the career aspirations variable. Gender was the variable chosen as the moderator with two categories: male and female.

The coefficient for availability expectations of leaders is positive ($\beta = 0.13$), and the outcome is not statistically significant ($p = 0.20$); nonetheless, by tendency, participants who have higher availability expectations also had slightly increased career aspirations. Furthermore, the coefficient for gender is also positive ($\beta = 0.50$), and the result is not reliable ($p = 0.07$), but there tends to be a small difference in career aspirations between men and women. In addition to this, the result of the X*W interaction ($\beta = 0.01$) is also not meaningful ($p = 0.85$); thus, the effect of availability expectations on career aspirations did not differ significantly between men and women. Therefore, H8 is not supported.

3.7   Exploration

In addition to the hypotheses testing outlined in Chapter 3.6, additional tests were conducted to further analyse supplementary questions that arose while conducting the analysis. These tests were performed in order to gain deeper insights into the collected data and with the purpose of identifying further interesting results.

Should a leader put in longer working hours than normal employees?

The results to the question regarding whether a leader should work longer working hours than normal employees can be depicted in Table 3.5. These suggest that there is almost no variation in the opinions of male and female employees regarding whether leaders should put in longer working hours.

Gender	Male		Female	
Item	N	%	N	%
Yes, significantly longer hours	103	16.5	100	17.1
Yes, longer working hours	273	43.7	252	43.0
Yes, but only a little longer working hours	145	23.2	131	22.4
No, not at all longer working hours	104	16.6	103	17.6

Table 3.5: Perception of participants regarding leaders' availability

The majority of both female (60.1%) and male (60.2%) employees agree that leaders should put in more working hours than normal workers. A smaller percentage of women (22.4%) and men (23.2%) believe that leaders should work only slightly more working hours, while a similar percentage of females (17.6%) and males (16.6%) disagreed with the statement.

Overall, these results suggest that a majority of both male and female employees agree that leaders should work longer than normal employees but not necessarily significantly more. The results also suggest that there is no considerable difference in the opinions of male and female participants regarding this statement.

Do women have lower career aspirations in female-dominated workplaces as well?

Previously, we tested whether women have different aspirations when working in a male-dominated environment, and we concluded that a prevalent male presence in the workplace

is not affecting them significantly. Furthermore, we were interested in checking if there is a meaningful result in career aspirations when considering female participants who are engaged in female-dominated environments. Therefore, we conducted an independent t-test again.

There were no significant differences ($t(91)$ = -0.78, p = 0.44) in scores for men (M = 3.31, SD = 1.98) and women = (M = 2.79, SD = 1.81). The differences in the means (means difference = -0.52, 95% CI: -1.87 to 0.82) were relatively small. Hence, the hypothesis that men and women have different career aspirations in a female-dominated environment was not supported.

The outcome is similar to the first findings, indicating that the gender of the workplace distribution is not affecting women more than men when it comes to their career aspirations. However, it is important to mention that there were 85 women and only eight men who were engaged in such a workplace. Interestingly, even though the difference in the number of female and male participants is rather high, women have a smaller mean value than men for career aspirations. Nevertheless, the difference between the two groups is insignificant.

Do women with children have different career aspirations than the ones without?

During our testing, we did not examine the potential influence of having children on women's career aspirations. Therefore, we conducted a t-test to compare the mean values of women with and without children.

The differences in the outcome ($t(584)$ = -0.28, p = 0.79) in scores for women without children (M = 2.98, SD = 1.75) and women with children = (M = 3.03, SD = 1.94 were not significant. The disparity in the means between the two groups (means difference = -0.05, 95% CI: -0.39 to 0.29) was very small. Hence, this outcome suggests that, in this sample, having children does not appear to have a significant impact on women's career aspirations.

How strong is the relationship between career aspirations and availability expectations across gender in gender-dominated environments?

Furthermore, we were interested in exploring only the relationship between career aspirations and availability expectations between men and women in gender-dominated workplaces. Therefore, we further checked the correlation between these variables.

As shown in Table 3.6, in male-dominated workplaces, for men, there is a positive correlation between availability expectations from leaders towards employees and individuals' career aspirations. In such environments, men whose leaders have higher availability expectations from them tend to aspire higher. This relationship gets weaker as the

Correlation between career aspirations and availability expectations

Gender in Organisations	> 90% M		> 60% M		M & F (40-60%)		> 60% F		> 90% F	
Participants' Gender	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Pearson Correlation	0.41	-0.2	0.33	0.15	0.2	0.27	0.04	0.13	-0.36	-0.01
Sig.	< 0.001	0.89	< 0.001	0.08	0.004	< 0.001	0.70	0.06	0.39	0.90
N	110	38	302	136	227	220	84	217	8	85

Table 3.6: Bi-variate correlation between career aspirations and availability expectations in all working environments (M - male, F - female)

number of females in the working environment increases, such that in female-dominated workplaces, there is no relationship between the two measures in the case of men.

Nonetheless, when considering women, there is a significant correlation between their aspirations and their leaders' expectations to be available only in gender-balanced workplaces. The result suggests that women have higher expectations from their leaders and also tend to have higher career aspirations. There is no relationship between the two measures in male- or female-dominated environments in the case of women.

CHAPTER 4

Discussion

4.1 Summary

Traditionally, women have been facing various barriers when accessing the workforce, and their path to enter and advance in professional life has been challenging (Domenico & Jones, 2006). They were often viewed as inappropriate for working, with the general assumption that they are better suited to stay home and take care of household and family responsibilities (Hartman & Barber, 2019). This belief generated challenges for women to enter the workforce and pursue high-level positions because societal expectations and norms hindered their options and opportunities. However, women have made progress and now hold even leadership positions (Hyland et al., 2020). Nonetheless, they are still perceived as being unsuited for such roles (Bosak & Sczesny, 2008). There are still discrepancies across gender when it comes to equality regarding wage or even when it comes to having the same chances to climb the career ladder (Hill et al., 2016).

On top of that, the increasing job demands made it harder not only for women but also for male workers, to separate between job and personal life (Borgkvist et al., 2021). New concepts such as FWA have made their way into many companies' policies in an attempt to support work-life integration. However, it seems that solutions such as working remotely, come with their own challenges, as they make the boundaries between private and professional life even more blurry. One important effect they have on workers is creating the expectation of having to be reachable around the clock for job-related matters (Van Zoonen et al., 2022). This, however, could impede especially women, who are predominantly the ones handling child- and house-related duties during their free time, thus making it harder for them to become high performers in their careers.

The main objective of this study was to explore if availability expectations have an influence on gendered career aspirations. The social role theory constitutes the basis of our thesis, which argues that gendered behaviour is an outcome of societal expectations

73

and traditional values. Furthermore, it states that men are rather associated with agentic traits, suitable for leadership roles, while women are associated with communal traits, suitable for household and family (Eagly & Wood, 1987). As an extension of the social role theory, the role congruity theory claims that the internalisation of gender stereotypes by women can be a detriment to their professional life, as it may lead them to doubt their own capabilities, underestimate themselves, limit their aspirations, and maintain biases that prevent their career advancements (Eagly & Karau, 2002). The presence of these factors in the organisational context has reinforced the stereotypical behaviour, impeding women's access to opportunities for professional progress (Hartman & Barber, 2019).

Throughout the tests conducted within the thesis, we found that men and women have different career aspirations, and as expected, women's aspirations were slightly lower than those of men. These outcomes align with prior research made on this topic, which has shown that women lower their aspirations in comparison to men (Hartman & Barber, 2019).

From one perspective, these outcomes may be a result of the internalisation of the stereotypes, which individuals tend to use as guidelines in their daily lives and behave according to them. In contrast to women, men believe they are better suited for leadership and build masculine-based workplaces, where women feel discouraged. While men tend to show stereotypical masculine characteristics, women rather prioritise emotional connections, nonetheless, these traits are not always rewarded. Men behaving in concordance with the masculine stereotypes are being incentivised, whilst successful women are being negatively perceived. Thus, females are more likely to underestimate their capabilities and diminish themselves (Hartman & Barber, 2019). From another perspective, the difference in career aspirations could be explained also by the barriers that women encounter, which include societal expectations, gender biases, and the adverse effects that have an impact on their career advancement (Hill et al., 2016).

Furthermore, women tend to prioritise family and household, however, they face difficulties in managing their time between work and private life. Moreover, they also feel guilty for not spending enough time with their families and children. In comparison to female employees, men are less preoccupied with these aspects. They are rather concerned with work shifts and schedules (Sousa et al., 2018).

Although women have different career aspirations than men and they face various barriers, being employed in a male-dominated workplace does not necessarily imply that women lower their career aspirations in comparison to men. Our results suggest that the working environment and the gender of the workplace distribution may not be the main factor influencing women's career aspirations. This outcome, surprisingly, does not align with findings that state that women in male-dominated environments are mistreated and rather discouraged from advancing professionally (Gaines, 2017) and therefore have lower aspirations. The results may indicate that societal expectations change and tend to promote diversity and inclusion. However, career advancement can be influenced by various factors, such as individual choices, education, experience and values that one person has. These may hold greater weight than workplace gender distribution.

Furthermore, the fact that women in male-dominated workplaces do not necessarily lower their career aspirations implies promising evidence of progress towards gender equality (England et al., 2020).

Additionally, it might be that organisations started to take measures that support women to overcome the barriers they encounter, creating more inclusive workplaces. The lack of female role models is considered to be one of the barriers. Research shows that, for example, if women are exposed to successful female role models, it can boost their self-confidence and convince them that they are also capable of advancing to leadership positions (Dasgupta & Asgari, 2004).

After further reviewing the literature on the motivation to manage, we noticed a misalignment between our results and an earlier paper on the topic, which states that women are perceived as being less ambitious in comparison to men. However, it is important to note that this assumption does not classify women as less effective when holding a high-level position (Kalkowski & Fritz, 2004).

Our further research shows that, despite the increasing job demands and usually having to perform household duties, women are as willing as men to take work-related calls outside business hours. Notably, this finding goes against concepts described by the social role theory, according to which women are naturally perceived by society as being the ones responsible for carrying out domestic duties, therefore being compelled by society into committing to their families (Eagly & Wood, 1987). Because family and work make simultaneous demands, the more time a woman spends on one, the less time she is expected to be available for the other (Psacharopoulos & Tzannatos, 1989). The presence of children in women's lives is widely believed to have negative effects on their careers. This is because women need to dedicate a significant amount of their time to child care, and their homework and needs (Johnson & Lee Rodgers, 2006). However, this might not always be the case. As one study shows, for instance, in the 1990s Scandinavian countries, the female workforce participation rate was exceptionally high in comparison to that of men and varied little across age groups. Both Sweden and Finland recorded the highest female participation rates in the 25-44 age group. An explanation for this could be the fact that these countries have well-developed social legislation and support for parents, offering not only the possibility for maternal but also paternal leave (Psacharopoulos & Tzannatos, 1989). We could argue that this is also the case for today's Austria, as its social system allows both parents to take leave after their babies are born, not only offering financial support for the stay-home parent but also allocating money for children up to the age of 18, respectively 24 years old if they are studying. Unfortunately, statistics show a different picture, with men rarely taking the majority part of childcare, which was reflected especially during COVID-19 times (Hartner-Tiefenthaler et al., 2022).

Nevertheless, this also does not align with recent findings which state that women who are mothers are not able to put in so many hours due to childcare duties (Kalev & Deutsch, 2018). This could be questioned in our current context, and it is definitely worth further investigation, especially since we found no significant difference in career aspirations when comparing women with and without kids. Our findings show that child-rearing

responsibilities do not affect their aspirations; namely working mothers have similar aspirations as women without children. We believe that this could be a result of the fact that in recent years, both men and women get involved in parenting (Ben Renner, 2022). Even though mothers need to offer more time for child care, lately, fathers also support mothers so that they both can also focus on their careers. Thus, women who have children have the opportunity to build also a career besides their families. One more thing to take into account in Austria is the fact that the number of births per 1000 women (Thomas & Petrovic, 2022) has steadily decreased from 22.44 in 1994 to 18.97 in 2021, according to statistics (Austria, 2022).

Moreover, based on the assumption that female-dominated environments are seen as 'warmer' and are supposed to be built around feminine traits (empathy, care) (Nash & Moore, 2021), we assumed that they would come with lower availability expectations (Born et al., 2018). Although there are studies to support these theories, the data we gathered proved that there is no significant difference between the availability expectations from female- and male-dominated workplaces (which are known as highly competitive and demanding). Men are expected by society, due to gender roles, to prioritise their careers and fulfil their 'breadwinner' duties (Higgins & Duxbury, 1992). Because of this, male employees may feel pressured by these societal expectations. In addition, they are also supposed to show motivation (Eagly & Wood, 1987) when considering work and career advancements. Thus, it may be ingrained in men's perceptions that they constantly need to put in the effort to reach high-level positions at work. This could also imply working longer hours. Therefore it might be that, especially in male-dominated environments, the relationship between career aspirations and availability expectations is higher for men than for women. Furthermore, women seek work-life balance and FWA to manage both private and work life, while men focus on their careers.

The discrepancies between past research and our current results could be explained by the fact that FWA, through technological advancements, allowed the entire workforce to adapt to the new working requirements, offering not only men but also women more autonomy and decision power in the way they choose to perform their work-related tasks (Christin, 2015). Women are known to benefit from these kinds of arrangements more than men, and the reason behind it has to do with needing to harmonise their work and personal life (Borgkvist et al., 2021). It thus seems as if FWA acted as enablers for women to rise to the general availability expectations of today's workplaces. However, further research with regard to this is needed.

Next, we investigated leadership and came to discover that leaders and employees without leadership positions have different opinions about the number of time leaders put in at their jobs. This is not entirely unexpected, as one's personal and contextual opinions tend to be different. In our case, employees seem to believe that leaders do have to put in more hours, but not as much time as leaders themselves consider they have to. We think that this is an exciting field to explore, especially since the way supervisors' work availability is perceived can have a significant influence on the workplace dynamic. The research found that employees who assumed their supervisors to have high availability and responsiveness

were more likely to report higher levels of job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Reinke & Gerlach, 2021), which can contribute to overall companies' productivity.

Particularly interesting is the fact that both male and female leaders share the same opinion with regard to the added time a leader should be available for work. Although this means that both genders are aware of the perceived implications of a leadership role, this does not give us insights into whether they consider this factor when aspiring for higher positions. Nonetheless, this opens up a promising research avenue for future studies on this topic.

Furthermore, we discovered that gender is not an influencing factor for leaders and non-leaders with regard to availability expectations. In addition to this, men and women are not necessarily having different career aspirations because of availability expectations. Hence, our results challenge the assumptions that women face greater challenges in balancing work and family responsibilities compared to men, especially when being in a leadership position. Additionally, the outcome also disagrees with the belief that women might have to make compromises in order to be able to climb the career ladder, the way it is explained in theory (Guillaume & Pochic, 2009). Furthermore, the findings lead us to believe that other factors, apart from perceived expectations of being available outside working hours, may have a greater impact on career aspirations, for example, stereotypes, as already stated in Chapter 2.1.1.

Generally, the way women are perceived nowadays in the workforce changed substantially. Not only that a considerable number of women joined the workforce, but they also succeeded and achieved great results (Domenico & Jones, 2006). In addition to this, for young women it is more important to have a high-paying career in comparison to young men (Patten & Parker, 2011). This shift goes against societal expectations and could also lead to women having higher career aspirations with time because according to current targets and long-term plans, a high number of companies have accomplished gender balance at senior management levels. Similarly, organisations also plan to reach this balance in C-level positions (Martin Wassell et al., 2020).

4.2 Implications

The findings of this study highlight the importance of addressing the under-representation of women in leadership positions. Even in our study, where we tried to gather a homogeneous sample and where the male/female proportion is balanced, there are more than twice as many male leaders compared to female ones. So far, worldwide women's activism has succeeded in establishing legal and constitutional frameworks that have paved the way for women to occupy positions of power and leadership. Undoubtedly, women have made significant progress in challenging traditional norms. However, the struggle for gender equality has been arduous. Measures, such as gender quotas and affirmative action policies have been implemented to increase women's opportunities to attain leadership positions, but in spite of those, there are still more matters to overcome with time (Kiamba, 2008).

The research conducted for our thesis emphasises, among others, the barriers faced by women in the workplace. Organisations should raise awareness, approach and overcome the challenges that female employees encounter. In order to accomplish this, the first step would be to recognise the existence of implicit gender bias, which is crucial to achieving equal career opportunities. This acknowledgement would enable organisations to scrutinise and rectify policies and practices that unintentionally contribute to gender disparities or reinforce implicit bias. Behavioural science research indicates that measures that seem logical at first glance may actually be counterproductive, which is why organisations should always make very well-informed decisions with regard to implementing such solutions (Ellemers, 2014). Various strategies such as mentorship programs, leadership development opportunities, guidelines and practices could help break down gender stereotypes and create a more supportive environment for women to succeed in their careers and reach their aspirations. Moreover, it highlights the need of promoting gender equality and work-life balance. Both male and female individuals could benefit from this and it would increase their job satisfaction, productivity, and career success.

Furthermore, based on the results of the study, it can be also concluded that male-dominated workplaces do not significantly affect gendered career aspirations. This finding is the opposite of the general assumption that women are discouraged from pursuing higher-level positions in male-dominated fields due to hostile work environments. Instead, the outcome suggests that they tend to have very similar professional goals.

The implications of our test outcomes indicate that working mothers do not have significant differences in their career aspirations when compared to women who do not have children. We found this result to be surprisingly unusual when considering the stereotypical belief that the presence of children in women's lives can impede their professional aspirations and advancements.

By confronting this stereotype, our conclusion proposes awareness for companies and policymakers that attempt to promote and reach gender equality in organisations. It is necessary that employers support working mothers, by developing policies that take into consideration the responsibilities that mothers have. They may have to take FWA

or maternity leaves. By creating and applying such policies, organisations can promote a more inclusive working environment where working mothers have the possibility to pursue their career aspirations, while also encouraging women to have children.

Throughout our analysis, we noticed a strong correlation between increased availability expectations from supervisors in male-dominated environments for individuals with higher career aspirations. We consider this to be a reinforcement of the idea that men are expected to prioritise their professional development over other aspects of their lives. In line with this stereotype, they could feel pressured to comply with traditional gender roles to the detriment of their personal or family life. On one hand, this finding may imply that male-dominated environments are more supportive of men who prioritise their careers, while potentially penalising women who do not do the same. On another hand, it could mean that men are more forced to bring home the money, as the women do not earn enough to support their families. This would put men in a position where they do not have a choice but to prioritise their work, although they might prefer caring for their families.

Overall, these implications highlight the importance of challenging gender stereotypes and biases and creating work environments that support all employees in achieving their career aspirations, regardless of gender. Reducing the barriers and stereotypical behaviour and promoting gender equality could develop more diverse and inclusive workplaces and reduce the pay gap. Women would have then the possibility to show their real potential (Gaines, 2017). In addition to that, it is necessary for women to change from within, to transform their mindset. This requires coming up with programs that empower women, allowing them to possess the skills and self-assurance required to seize leadership opportunities without waiting for those to be offered to them (Kiamba, 2008).

4.3 Limitations and Future Research

Our research examined how availability expectations influence the career aspirations of men and women, providing findings for leaders and employees in both male- and female-dominated working environments. However, we acknowledge the limitations of our work. First, our study included only research participants from Austria. Hence, our results are not necessarily applicable to the workforce in other countries.

We also recognise the limitations of the sample of our participants, our outcomes being highly influenced by the data set we used. A major limitation is the fact that most participants work in an even mix of male and female environments, which gave us a small sample to work with when carrying out tests related to gender-dominated workplaces. Thus, some of the results were not statistically significant, though these outcomes represent a slight starting point for further research. Moreover, we assume that testing on another data set containing more participants who have jobs in gender-dominated workplaces could lead to obtaining meaningful results.

Also, all our participants were selected by the *Bilendi & respondi* platform, on which they are registered as panellists. This means that they were chosen to fit our target, based on certain criteria, rather than being randomly selected from a larger population. This pre-selection could introduce bias into the study because the participants may not be representative of the larger population they belong to. Another argument could be that their results regarding availability expectations are related to the industry they work in. For example, if we consider participants that have fixed shifts and a schedule they need to follow, such as hospital staff, the availability expectations are then obviously not that high outside business hours. This may not be the case for IT workers, where working from home is a common practice. However, we do not see this as a limitation, given the increased size of the data set.

To summarise everything that has been discussed, the lack of gender diversity in leadership is mostly explained by the challenges that women face. The prevalence of stereotypes at all levels, individual, social and institutional, impede them from pursuing high-level positions (Ansari et al., 2016). The persisting barriers are believed to be linked to the impact that gender has, rather than only to gender discrepancies (Newman, 1993). A solution that could be considered in order to overcome gendered stereotypes in working environments is to make changes at all three levels (Ansari et al., 2016).

Another interesting path worth exploring is performing a similar analysis moderated by industry. This could prove relevant, as some fields offer, more than others, the possibility of FWA. Unfortunately, in our study, we could not control for FWA or industry.

Many studies so far have focused predominantly on leadership and leadership styles (generally or related to gender), but only a few have actually explored the implications of responsibility, time and effort that come along with leading roles. In our research, among others, we tried to focus on the expectations people have of leaders, and we were faced with scarce resources. We, therefore, hope more studies will be carried out in the future

in order to close the knowledge gap on the perceived implications of leading roles.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that these findings are based on correlation, moderation and T-test studies, and further research is needed to confirm these results and explore potential underlying factors. Further investigation with a larger and more diverse sample may be necessary to better understand the associations between career aspirations and leader expectations.

4.4 Conclusion

To summarise, our study contributes to the existing literature on gendered career aspirations by demonstrating that women have different career aspirations than men, which might come as a result of gender stereotypes. Our work aims to provide a better understanding of career aspirations in gender-dominated workplaces, where we contributed to putting together a strong, coherent theoretical base. Contrary to expectations, women's career aspirations are not impacted by the workplace gender distribution and, more than that, their willingness to be meet job demands by being available outside working hours is similar to men's. This could mean that societal expectations evolved in an egalitarian way, having, at least in terms of responsibility, equal expectations of men and women.

In terms of work-related availability, we were surprised to see that gender made no difference in the overall willingness of the participants to be available for work-related matters outside business hours. Like in the case of career aspirations, we found that external availability expectations (e.g. of supervisors) do not vary across workplaces with different gender distributions.

Given these results, it is understandable why both male and female leaders have similar perceptions about the amount of time they are expected to be available. Furthermore, their perspective differs in comparison to employees who do not have leadership responsibilities. However, our analysis showed that the gender of the participant has no significant influence on the way leaders and non-leaders perceive the time commitment expected from leading roles. Ultimately, a thought-provoking finding was the fact that the perceived need of being available as a leader is not a decisive factor in why men and women have different career aspirations.

Our findings could bring some clarity regarding the problem we set out to investigate, which is the well-known phenomenon of women's under-representation in leadership positions. Fortunately, availability expectations do not further hinder women in their pursue of higher-level positions. Although the research is more relevant to Western Europe, it seems that women found ways to adapt to the increasing requirements of today's competitive working environments. These results might shine a light on the ongoing gender discrepancy in the workforce.

We hope that these findings will inspire other researchers to further investigate what enables women to keep up, what strategies they adopted and what changes they needed to implement in their lifestyles.

APPENDIX A

Questionnaire

A.1 English Version

To see if you fit into our target group, please answer the following three questions:

1. On average, how many hours do you actually work per week?
   ○ 35 and more hours/week (full-time)
   ○ 20-34.5 hours/week
   ○ 1-19 hours/week
   ○ I am currently not employed

2. What is your employment status?
   ○ Employed
   ○ Self-employed/freelance
   ○ Other: ....

3. In which year were you born?
   ....

Questions based on the vignette videos:

1. I believe that the main character should take the call in his/her leisure time given her current position in the company.
   ○ Strongly disagree

○ Mostly disagree
○ Rather disagree
○ Neither agree nor disagree
○ Rather agree
○ Mostly agree
○ Strongly agree

2. How do you usually react when confronted with a similar situation?
○ I would take the call
○ I would send a message that I will call later
○ I would send a message that I am available only the next day
○ I would ignore the call
○ Other: ....

In the questions below, please answer them regarding your personal situation as you currently see it in your work:

1. To what extent can you decide yourself at what time you do your work?
○ Not at all
○ To a very small extent
○ To a certain extent
○ To a high extent
○ To a very high extent

2. How often have you worked from home in the last month?
○ On at least half of the working days
○ On less than half of the working days
○ Never

3. How often in recent months have you felt that your work is preventing you from spending as much time with your family as you would like?
○ Always
○ Usually
○ Sometimes
○ Rarely
○ Never

Do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Mostly disagree	Rather disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Rather agree	Mostly agree	Strongly agree
In our team at work it is common to be available for work-related matters outside of regular working hours.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Usually, my supervisor expects me to respond to incoming calls or messages when I am not at work.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Usually, my supervisor expects me to be available when I am not at work.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I plan to rise to rise to a higher leadership position in my organisation or business.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I hope to advance in my career.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I hope to move up to a (higher) leadership position in my organisation or business.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Do you agree with the following statements?

1. Do you think leaders need to put in longer working hours compared to employees without leadership role?
   ○ Yes, significantly longer working hours
   ○ Yes, longer working hours
   ○ Yes, but only a little longer working hours
   ○ No, not at all longer working hours

2. A leader should also be available outside their working hours.
   ○ Strongly disagree
   ○ Mostly disagree
   ○ Rather disagree
   ○ Neither agree nor disagree
   ○ Rather agree
   ○ Mostly agree
   ○ Strongly agree

Questions about you:

1. Which gender do you identify yourself with?
   ○ Female
   ○ Male
   ○ Diverse/Other

2. What is your family status?
   ○ Single
   ○ Cohabiting with partner
   ○ Married or registered partnership
   ○ Widowed
   ○ Divorced

3. How many children under 14 years live in your household?
   ....

4. What is your highest educational degree?
   ○ Compulsory schooling
   ○ Vocational education training/school
   ○ Secondary academic school / vocational educational college

⃝ Tertiary education (university, post secondary college)
⃝ Other: ....

5. Which gender does your supervisor have?
⃝ Female
⃝ Male
⃝ Diverse

6. How many employees does your company have?
⃝ 1 to 9
⃝ 10 to 99
⃝ 100 to 249
⃝ 250 or more employees
⃝ I don't know

7. In my immediate workplace there are:
⃝ Far more men than women (more than 90% men)
⃝ Mostly men (about 60% to 90%)
⃝ An even mix of men and women (about 40% to 60%)
⃝ More women than men (about 60% to 90%)
⃝ Mostly women (more than 90%)
⃝ I don't know

8. In which area do you work?
⃝ Private company
⃝ Public sector
⃝ Non profit
⃝ Other: ....

9. In which country do you work?
⃝ Austria
⃝ Other country

10. Do you have a leadership role at your workplace (i.e., you are responsible for supervising and guiding other employees)?
⃝ Yes, I am a leader (formalised)
⃝ Yes, I am supervising others, but I am not formally a leader
⃝ No, not yet (pursue a leadership position)
⃝ No, I don't want to become a leader

11. Why do you not pursue a leadership position in your organisation?
....

12. You indicated that you are not a leader yet. What is preventing you to become a leader tomorrow? What do you still need for becoming a leader?
....

A.2 German Version

Um zu sehen, ob Sie in unsere Zielgruppe passen, beantworten Sie bitte die folgenden drei Fragen:

1. Wie viele Arbeitsstunden arbeiten Sie normalerweise pro Woche?
   - ⚪ 35 und mehr Stunden/Woche (Vollzeit)
   - ⚪ 20-34.5 Stunden/Woche
   - ⚪ 1-19 Stunden/Woche
   - ⚪ Derzeit bin ich nicht erwerbstätig

2. Wie ist Ihr Angestelltenverhältnis?
   - ⚪ Angestellt/unselbständig erwerbstätig
   - ⚪ Selbstständig/freiberuflich tätig
   - ⚪ Sonstiges: ....

3. In welchem Jahr wurden Sie geboren?
   ....

Fragen zu den Vignettenvideos:

1. Ich bin der Meinung, dass die Hauptfigur angesichts ihrer derzeitigen Position im Unternehmen den Anruf in ihrer Freizeit annehmen sollte.
   - ⚪ Stimme überhaupt nicht zu
   - ⚪ Stimme überwiegend nicht zu
   - ⚪ Stimme eher nicht zu
   - ⚪ Teils teils
   - ⚪ Stimme eher schon zu
   - ⚪ Stimme überwiegend zu
   - ⚪ Stimme völlig zu

2. Wie würden Sie selbst in dieser Situation reagieren?
   - ⚪ Ich würde den Anruf annehmen
   - ⚪ Ich würde eine Nachricht schicken, dass ich später zurückrufen werde
   - ⚪ Ich würde eine Nachricht schicken, dass ich erst morgen wieder Zeit habe
   - ⚪ Ich würde den Anruf ignorieren
   - ⚪ Sonstiges: ....

In den nachfolgenden Fragen beantworten Sie diese bitte in Bezug auf Ihre persönliche Situation, wie Sie sie aktuell in Ihrer Arbeit einschätzen:

1. Inwieweit können Sie selbst entscheiden, wann Sie Ihre Arbeit erledigen?
   ○ Überhaupt nicht
   ○ In einem sehr geringen Ausmaß In einem gewissen Ausmaß
   ○ In einem hohen Ausmaß
   ○ In einem sehr hohen Ausmaß

2. Wie oft haben Sie in den letzten vier Wochen im Homeoffice gearbeitet?
   ○ An mindestens der Hälfte der Arbeitstage
   ○ Weniger als die Hälfte der Arbeitstage
   ○ Nie

3. Wie oft haben Sie in den letzten Monaten das Gefühl gehabt, dass Ihre Arbeit Sie davon abhält, so viel Zeit mit Ihrer Familie zu verbringen, wie Sie es möchten?
   ○ Immer
   ○ Meistens
   ○ Manchmal
   ○ Selten
   ○ Nie

Inwieweit stimmen Sie den folgenden Aussagen zu?

	Trifft über- haupt nicht zu	Trifft über- wieg- end nicht zu	Trifft eher nicht zu	Teils teils zu	Trifft eher wieg- end zu	Trifft über- zu	Trifft völlig-
In unserem Arbeitsteam ist es üblich, auch außerhalb der, regulären Arbeitszeiten für arbeitsbezogene Dinge erreichbar zu sein.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
In der Regel erwartet mein/e Vorgesetzte/r von mir, dass ich auf eingehende Anrufe oder Nachrichten beantworte, wenn ich nicht arbeite.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
In der Regel erwartet mein/e Vorgesetzte/r von mir, dass außerhalb der Arbeitszeit erreichbar bin.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Ich strebe in meiner Organi- sation oder meinem Unter- nehmen eine höhere Führungsposition an.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Ich hoffe, dass ich in meiner Karriere vorankomme.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Ich hoffe, eine (höhere) Führungsposition in meiner Organisation oder meinem Unternehmen zu erreichen.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Inwieweit stimmen Sie den folgenden Aussagen zu?

1. Glauben Sie, dass Führungskräfte im Vergleich zu Beschäftigten ohne Führungsrolle längere Arbeitszeiten haben?
   ○ Ja, deutlich längere Arbeitszeiten
   ○ Ja, längere Arbeitszeiten
   ○ Ja, aber nur etwas längere Arbeitszeiten
   ○ Nein, gar keine längeren Arbeitszeiten

2. Eine Führungskraft soll auch außerhalb ihrer Arbeitszeiten erreichbar sein.
   ○ Trifft überhaupt nicht zu
   ○ Trifft überwiegend nicht zu
   ○ Trifft eher nicht zu
   ○ Teils teils
   ○ Trifft eher zu
   ○ Trifft überwiegend zu Trifft völlig zu

Fragen zu Ihrer Person:

1. Welchem Geschlecht ordnen Sie sich zu?
   ○ Weiblich
   ○ Männlich
   ○ Divers

2. Was ist Ihr Familienstand?
   ○ Ledig / allein lebend
   ○ In Lebensgemeinschaft
   ○ Verheiratet oder eingetragene
   ○ Partnerschaft
   ○ Verwitwet
   ○ Geschieden

3. Wie viele Kinder unter 14 Jahren leben in Ihrem Haushalt?
   ....

4. Was ist Ihr höchster Bildungsabschluss, den Sie bis jetzt erreicht haben?
   ○ Pflichtschule wie z.B. Neue Mittelschule, AHS-Unterstufe
   ○ Lehre oder Berufsbildende mittlere Schule (Fach- oder Handelschule)
   ○ AHS oder BHS (Matura einer allgemeinbildenden oder berufsbildenden Schul, Kolleg)

◯ Universität, Hochschule, Akademie
◯ Sonstiges: ....

5. Welches Geschlecht hat Ihr Vorgesetzter/Ihre Vorgesetzte?
◯ Weiblich
◯ Männlich
◯ Divers

6. Wie viele Beschäftigte hat Ihr Unternehmen?
◯ 1 bis 9
◯ 10 bis 99
◯ 100 bis 249
◯ 250 oder mehr Beschäftigte
◯ Ich weiß nicht

7. In meiner Arbeitsstätte arbeiten:
◯ Fast nur Männer (mehr als 90% Männer)
◯ Mehrheitlich Männer (ca. 60% bis 90%)
◯ In etwa gleich viele Männer und Frauen (40% bis 60%)
◯ Mehrheitlich Frauen (ca. 60% bis 90%)
◯ Fast nur Frauen (mehr als 90%)
◯ Ich weiß nicht

8. In welchem Bereich arbeiten Sie?
◯ Privatwirtschaft
◯ Im staatlichen oder öffentlichen Sektor
◯ Gemeinnütziger Bereich, NPO
◯ Sonstiges: ....

9. In welchem Land arbeiten Sie?
◯ Österreich
◯ Anderes Land

10. Haben Sie in Ihrer Arbeit eine Leitungsfunktion (das heißt Sie sind für die Beaufsichtigung und Anleitung von anderen Mitarbeitern und Mitarbeiterinnen zuständig)?
◯ Ja, ich bin Führungskraft (formal im Organigramm)
◯ Ja, ich leite Personen an, bin aber formal keine Führungskraft
◯ Nein, noch nicht (strebe eine Führungsposition an)
◯ Nein, ich will keine Führungskraft werden

11. Warum streben Sie keine Führungsposition in Ihrer Organisation an?

....

12. Sie haben angegeben, dass Sie noch keine Führungskraft sind. Was hindert Sie daran, morgen eine Führungskraft zu werden? Was brauchen Sie noch, um eine Führungskraft zu werden?

....

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