

# CHALMERS



## Translating Multinational Policies to Local Actions

How Volvo Group IT Conducts Gender Equality Work in India

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## Överföra Multinationella Policier till Lokala Åtgärder

Hur Volvo Group IT Bedriver Jämställdhetsarbetet i Indien

**Bachelor Thesis of Industrial Engineering and Management**

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We took great pleasure in conducting this thesis and hope that it will bring light to an issue of high importance - how do multinational companies implement gender policies?

# Abstract

Women's role within technology and management in India has developed fast. To ensure that women reach their full professional potential it is important that they are included on the same conditions as their male colleagues. However, multinational companies, such as Volvo Group, often have policies that are common for all parts of the company, which can cause difficulties in translating, adapting and implementing policies at a local level.

The aim of this Bachelor thesis is to map how Volvo Group implements gender equality policies locally in Bangalore. Additionally, our thesis aims to investigate how the Bangalore unit addresses gender equality in the recruitment process and how the organization facilitates the advancement of female employees. Further, we aim to examine how gender policies can be carried out efficiently in multinational companies.

The scientific approach of this Bachelor thesis is abductive reasoning. The theoretical framework includes literature from three perspectives; mapping of gender equality policies, recruitment processes and advancing within organizations. The empirical data is based on semi-structured interviews with employees at Volvo Group IT in Bangalore.

We have investigated the gender equality situation at Volvo Group IT in Bangalore and from our interpretation, Volvo Group IT in Bangalore is a flexible company regarding equality policies. However, the flexibility puts responsibility on the local leaders to implement the policies. In terms of gender equality in organizations, the recruitment process is a central part.

We found that internal recruitment is preferred over external recruitment, and that there seem to be no clear directives regarding affirmative action in the organization. Our study has shown that women in Volvo Group IT in Bangalore value structure and knowing what tasks they will return to after maternity leave. Further we claim that it is important to balance intrinsic and extrinsic leadership factors in the company, since we found that men and women seem to value different kind of leadership skills.

# Sammandrag

Indiska kvinnor har snabbt fått en allt mer framträdande roll i den moderna teknologiutvecklingen. För att kvinnor ska uppnå sin fulla potential i arbetslivet är det viktigt att de inkluderas på lika villkor som sina manliga kollegor. I multinationella företag, såsom Volvo Group, används vanligtvis jämställdhetspolicys som är gemensamma för hela koncerner. Koncerngemensamma policys medför emellertid utmaningar vid anpassning och implementering till lokal nivå.

Syftet med kandidatuppsatsen är att kartlägga hur Volvo Group implementerar koncernens jämställdhetspolicys lokalt i Bangalore, Indien, samt hur avdelningen i Bangalore adresserar jämställdhet i rekryteringsprocessen och hur organisationen underlättar kvinnors karriärsutveckling. Dessutom undersöks hur jämställdhet kan adresseras med hjälp av policys i multinationella företag på en mer generell nivå.

Det vetenskapliga tillvägagångssättet i denna kandidatuppsats är av abduktiv karaktär. Det teoretiska ramverket behandlar litteratur från tre olika perspektiv; jämställdhetspolicys, rekryteringsprocesser och karriärsutveckling. Empiriska data kommer från semistrukturerade intervjuer med anställda på Volvo Group IT i Bangalore.

Vår studie indikerar att Volvo Group IT i Bangalore är en flexibel organisation vad gäller jämställdhetspolicys. Flexibiliteten innebär att lokala chefer får stort ansvar vad gäller implementering av policys, vilket innebär stora möjligheter till påverkan, men också kräver ett mer gediget uppföljningsarbete.

Rekryteringsprocessen är en central del för att åstadkomma en mer jämställd arbetsplats. Utifrån våra intervjuer konstaterar vi att intern rekrytering verkar föredras över extern rekrytering och att det till synes saknas tydliga direktiv gällande kvotering av kvinnor på Volvo Group IT i Bangalore. Vår analys visar att kvinnor på Volvo Group IT i Bangalore värderar struktur och tryggheten i att veta vilka uppgifter de återvänder till efter föräldraledighet. Vi hävdar dessutom att det är viktigt att balansera män och kvinnors olika preferenser gällande ledarskapsstilar.

# Glossary

**Affirmative action** = Refers to a group who carry similar competence as the majority-group but is considered underprivileged and therefore is given priority when designating a role in the workplace

**Discrimination** = Happens when qualified individuals are penalized at work due to unrelated personal factors like: gender, age, nationality, race, ethnicity, skin color, cultural background, religion or beliefs, disability, genetics, health information, sexual orientation, union affiliation (Volvo Code of Conduct, retrieved 25 April 2018)

**Diversity** = The inclusion of people with different backgrounds, e.g. cultural backgrounds, ages and genders

**Diversity management** = Creating a work environment that is inclusive for diverse groups

**Diversity training** = Trainings which aim to help the employees work effectively in a diverse working environment

**Employees** = Refers to employees at all levels in an organization

**External recruitment** = When someone outside of the company is hired for an open position

**Gender** = Refers to the male and female gender, primarily differenced by social and cultural behavior

**Gender equality** = See section 2.1. for definition of gender equality

**Harassment** = Any conduct or comments that create, encourage, or permit an offensive or intimidating work environment. This includes verbal or physical harassment, bullying, sexual harassment, power harassment, racism, inappropriate humor, or other actions that offend or cause distress (Volvo Code of Conduct, retrieved 25 April 2018)

**HR** = Human Resources

**HR-manager** = Refers to the HR-manager at Volvo Group IT in Bangalore

**Internal recruitment** = When an existing employee is promoted to another position within the same company

**Local policies** = Policies that are locally adapted or locally formulated

**Macro-cultural** = The cultural paradigm one acts in constitutes the macro-culture

**Managerial staff** = Refers to respondents of our interviews with titles Group Managers, Department Managers, HR-manager and the Unit Director at Volvo Group IT in Bangalore

**Multinational policies** = Policies shared globally in an organization

**Non-managerial staff** = Refers to employees with titles IT Architect, Application Developer and Tester at Volvo Group IT in Bangalore

**Patrilocality** = The relationship and family structure that gives precedence to male members over female members. The complex linkages that exists in the hierarchical family structure is highlighted together with the male dominance in this system

**Policy** = A plan on how to handle certain situations that is officially agreed on in an organization

**Preferred-skills** = Merits, but not requirements, to get an employment

**Required-skills** = Requirements a candidate must meet to get an employment

**Sex role stereotype** = Stereotyped perceptions of the roles someone could have based on their sex

**STEM** = Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics

**Transformational leadership** = A motivation process that encourages subordinates to be actively engaged in working within an organization. Transformational leaders show concern for each subordinate's personal interests and individual characteristics, which influences employees' outlooks and behaviors (Soyeon, K. and Mannsoo, S., 2017)

**Unit director** = Refers to the unit director at Volvo Group IT in Bangalore

**Volvo Group** = The corporate group including eleven brands and ten business areas. E.g. Volvo Trucks, Renault Trucks, Volvo Buses and Volvo Penta are all a part of Volvo Group

**Volvo Group IT** = From the corporate group the division Volvo Group Finance is found, in which Volvo Group IT is a subpart. The division of Group IT e.g. includes Human Resources, Communication and Shared IT Services

**Volvo Group IT India** = Refers to the division of Volvo Group IT located in India or with connections to coworkers in India. Mainly we refer to Volvo Group IT India as the headquarter located in Bangalore

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# 1. Introduction

This Bachelor thesis discusses how to implement multinational gender policies at a local level, what challenges companies meet while trying to do so and if there are any strategies to be preferred to reach corporate gender equality goals worldwide. The thesis focuses on Volvo Group IT India and maps how gender equality work is carried through in that organization. Earlier studies and findings on the topic of gender policies, recruitment processes and existing obstacles related to the subject of gender equality in multinational organizations, and in particular the multinational IT sector, will be presented in chapter 4. Theoretical Framework. The data was collected through interviews with the unit director, the HR-manager, department managers, group managers and non-managerial staff within the organization of Volvo Group IT in Bangalore, India.

This Bachelor thesis is written on request of Volvo Group IT and covers the subject of implementation of multinational gender policies. In 2013, Fransson and Windrup carried out the student essay “Managing the work-family dilemma - a qualitative study of Volvo IT India” in Volvo Group IT India, which was then simply called Volvo IT India. Fransson and Windrup’s essay researched the work-life-balance of the employees in the organization. Further, their essay investigated the dual roles of women and how employees in the organization were handling the work-life-balance. Fransson and Windrup called for future research within the HR-field at Volvo Group IT India. We however, as students from Industrial Engineering and Management, have conducted a thesis focused on approaching gender equality from a managerial perspective.

The two leadership researchers Madsen and Scribner (2017) call for further research on why there has been progress for Indian women seeking and aiming for top management positions in organizations. The authors also ascertain that more work must be done on the topic of gender in cross-cultural management and they further request strategic cross-cultural scholarship on the topic of women in management and leadership. Similarly, management professors Bullough, Moore and Kalafatoglu (2017) state that a few multi-cultural studies have examined global strategic management connected to gender as well as diversity issues on an intra-national level and that this opens opportunities to make a significant academic impact on the subject.

Management and business researchers Soyeon and Mannsoo (2017) claim that studies on the topic of female transformational leadership point towards different directions. The authors further suggest that there might be a lack of studies exploring gender as a variable in the understanding of transformational leadership, which some studies suggest that female managers tend to be more prone to exhibit. Moreover, according to the authors, the lack of studies within the field of gender and

transformational leadership is especially true in the Asian context where female leadership is underexplored.

Hopefully this Bachelor thesis will contribute to the findings on the field of implementing gender policies and create better prerequisite as to how increased gender equality can be reached. It is also the intention of this thesis to map how Volvo Group IT is, or can be, part of this progress towards gender equality.

## 1.1. Problem Analysis and Research Questions

Multinational companies, such as Volvo Group, often have policies that are common for all parts of the organization, which sometimes cause difficulties in translating, adapting and implementing policies at a local level. Until 1980, multinational companies often had multinational policies which were implemented by the national managers. In recent years, the possibility for national managers to influence and adapt the policies to local circumstances has increased (Almond et al., 2005). In Volvo Group's sustainability report, the importance of diversity work is emphasized (AB Volvo 2018a), but the real question is what is done in practice on a local level regarding gender equality work.

Researching the Indian STEM-field is particularly interesting, as women in this domain tend to face several obstacles (Raghuram et al., 2017; Kameshwara & Shukla, 2017).

1. How does Volvo Group implement gender equality policies in the IT department in Bangalore, India?
  - What does Volvo Group's common gender equality policies consist of?
  - Are the multinational policies customized to India, and are the local circumstances in India considered?
  - How does Volvo Group IT in Bangalore work to increase gender equality in the workplace?
  - What kind of indicators does Volvo Group IT in Bangalore use to measure gender equality? Also, how is the gender equality work followed-up?

One of the main challenges in increasing the number of female employees lies in the recruitment process. In order to increase the number of women within the organization, it is important to research how Volvo Group IT in Bangalore organizes the recruitment process and makes sure that it does not disadvantage any gender.

2. How does Volvo Group IT in Bangalore address gender equality in the recruitment process?
  - What does Volvo Group IT in Bangalore do to attract more female applicants?
  - Does Volvo Group IT in Bangalore try to ensure objectivity towards the applicants during the recruitment process and if so, how?

- How does Volvo Group IT in Bangalore approach internal and external recruitment processes with regards to equality?

After successfully recruiting in a gender equal way, the next challenge lies in the retention of women in the workforce as well as facilitating the advancement of women in the organization. A common issue in India is that women quit working after marriage or maternity. It is therefore relevant to research how Volvo Group IT works to help and support women in their career advancement as well as making sure that women are not discriminated or disfavored during their advancement.

3. What is the situation at Volvo Group IT in Bangalore when it comes to women's opportunities for advancement in the organization?
  - What, if any, obstacles are women facing in their career advancement at Volvo Group IT in Bangalore?
  - What could be done to facilitate the career growth of women in Volvo Group IT in Bangalore?

## 1.2. Aim

The aim of this Bachelor thesis is to map how Volvo Group implements gender equality policies in the IT department in Bangalore as well as how Volvo Group IT in Bangalore addresses gender equality in both the recruitment process and when retaining women within the organization. By mapping how gender policies are carried out in Volvo Group IT in Bangalore, the purpose is to examine how a gender equality policy can be carried out in an efficient way within a multinational company.

## 1.3. Delimitations

This Bachelor thesis will not examine, in depth, how employees at Volvo Group IT handle their work-life-balance, since the matter of work-life-balance already has been covered by Fransson and Windrup (2013). Furthermore, we are aware that not all people identify themselves as either man or woman, but we claim that the limitation to two genders enables a comparison between men and women and thus serves a purpose. Additionally, we only focus on Volvo Group IT in Bangalore to ensure an in-depth study within one cultural context. Unfortunately, we have not been able to visit the office in Bangalore, which limits our analysis to interviews and secondary sources from Volvo Group, that is the Code of Conduct (2018) and the Sustainability reports from 2017 and 2018.

## 2. Background

### 2.1. The Importance of Gender Equality

Gender equality refers to equal responsibilities, possibilities, authorities and rights of both genders (United Nations, 2001). The Swedish perception of gender equality includes equal conditions regarding education, interest, personal aspirations and shared responsibility for housework.

Furthermore, it implies that both genders have the same opportunities for development both within the workplace and outside, as well as possibilities to reach financial independence (Nationalencyklopedin, 2018). However, all countries perceive the term gender equality differently and have different struggles.

Management and culture researchers Eden and Gupta (2017) have examined cross-country differences in gender equality. They found evidence that a large gap remains between poor and rich countries, and that this gap may be growing. Additionally, the scholars state that some evidence of correlation between human development and gender equality is provided. According to Eden and Gupta, gender equality among rich countries has improved by nearly 30 percent since 2000. Furthermore, the global gender gap regarding educational attainment appears to be almost closed, which also seems to be the case with the Indian population.

Professor of geography and migration Raghuram together with Dr. Clem Herman, lecturer in computing and communications who has studied women in STEM related fields, and their research associates (2017) present figures which indicate that having corporate gender diversity correlates with profitability. Raghuram et al. present how having at least 10 percent women on boards correlates with 2.5 percent to five percent higher returns on equity and how firms with 30 or higher percentage of their directors being women have 15 percent higher profitability than others. The authors also state that gender diverse teams perform significantly better than gender homogeneous teams.

### 2.2. Gender Equality Policies

Ben chop et al. (2015) argue that the importance of diversity rarely is contested by research and organizational leadership nowadays. However, how to translate the awareness into practice – that is, how to transform organizations into more inclusive and diverse workplaces – remains a major challenge (Ben chop et al., 2015). According to six researchers in the field of industrial and labor relations, most multinational companies try to adapt their policies differently in different regions (Lévesque et al. 2015). Almond et al. (2005), researchers in the field of multinational companies'

strategies, emphasize that the local implementation of policies tends to get more complicated for larger multinationals and that the headquarter in the host country must not only try to understand the local culture, but also the local managers and their agenda for the implementation to work. The authors claim that the implementation must be a continuous process since the local managers and workers tend to change with time.

The outcome of gender equality policies varies with different kinds of gender policy issues (Htun & Weldon, 2010). According to Lévesque et al. (2015), the local leaders have big influence during the implementation. Thus, it is important to understand policy processes and how actors and their cooperation might affect the policy process and outcomes (Htun & Weldon, 2010).

### 2.3. Volvo Group IT

Volvo Group IT is part of Volvo Group, a Swedish company manufacturing trucks, buses, construction equipment, marine engines and industrial engines. Volvo Group owns several brands; Volvo, Volvo Penta, UD, Terex Trucks, Renault Trucks, Prevost, Nova bus and Mack. Besides their own brands, Volvo Group is in collaboration with SDLG, Eicher and Dongfeng brands (AB Volvo, 2018b).

Volvo Group is, with its 95,000 employees, a company which actions influence the lives of many people (AB Volvo, 2018c). The Volvo Group Bangalore unit consists of 5,000 coworkers, including the Volvo Group IT division which consists of 1,500 employees. Volvo Group IT's headquarter is placed in Bangalore and the main function of this department is to deliver IT solutions to Volvo Group (Nair, et al., 2018). These solutions include IT systems, applications and network supporting processes within Volvo Group (AB Volvo, 2018d).

### 2.4. India Today

The Indian population is one of the most rapidly growing in the world (McKinsey & Company, 2016). With 1.324 billion citizens in 2016, India has the world's second largest population (World Bank, 2017). The Indian middle class make up three percent of the population, which translates to 3.6 percent of the world's middle-class population in 2015. India's middle class, in absolute terms, is the eighth biggest in the world (Credit Suisse AG, 2015). Nonetheless, according to McKinsey & Company (2016), 270 million Indians were still below the official poverty level in the year 2012. Additionally, about 680 million Indians were in 2012 below what McKinsey Global Institute call the Empowerment Line, meaning that these people were not able to meet the spending required to meet human development necessities (McKinsey & Company, 2016). In today's India about 72 percent of

the non-agricultural workers work in the informal sector (Biswas & Sharma, 2018). According to Yamunaprasad Dubey (2016), Indian women are overrepresented in the informally employed sector.

The economy of India is today proven to be the world's fastest growing large economy and is expected to have the world's third largest growth in GDP in 2030 (McKinsey & Company, 2016). McKinsey & Company suggests that this economic growth may contribute to a major change in the world's economic balance of power. India has also managed to climb in the ranking of the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report from rank 71 to 55 from year 2015 to 2016 (McKinsey & Company, 2016). Still, with only 17 percent contribution to GDP, India's women's contribution to the total GDP is the lowest share of female contribution to GDP in the world (McKinsey & Company, 2016). On the Bombay Stock Exchange 100, only 2.5 percent of the executive directorship positions are held by women (Catalyst, 2017). McKinsey & Company (2016) submits that the Indian female workforce makes up 24 percent of the total Indian workforce, which is significantly less than the global average of 40 percent. Consequently, McKinsey & Company suggests that closing this gender gap would emancipate a huge economic potential for the Indian economy. McKinsey & Company also put forward the estimation that if India could match the progress of the economies with the best gender parity in the region, the country's GDP could increase with approximately \$700 billion by the year of 2025.

Although women only make up 24 percent of the Indian formal workforce (McKinsey & Company, 2016), Indian women in fact make up 46.8 percent of all enrolled undergraduate students in India and 40.7 percent of all enrolled PhD students (Catalyst, 2017). Through increased attention on women's education, the literacy rates in India have increased from 18 to 65 percent in the last 50 years (Nakray, 2018). Nevertheless, Indian women are in average earning 57 percent of what their male counterparts earn when performing the same work, and this pay gap increases as women get more educated and advance in their careers.

## 2.5. Indian Women in STEM

Raghuram et al. (2017) report that 3.9 million people in India are employed in the Information Technology and Business Process Management (IT-BPM) industry. Among these 3.9 million people, approximately 1.3 million are women, which corresponds to over 34 percent. These numbers suggest that the IT-BPM industry employs more women than the average Indian sector. Over 51 percent of the entry recruits in the IT-BPM sector are women, but only 25 percent of the managerial positions are held by women, and less than one percent are in director positions (Raghuram et al., 2017).

Kameshwara and Shukla (2017) state that discrimination of Indian women is frequent. The authors claim that the discrimination is higher in scientific and technical fields than in other sectors. Women in scientific and technical fields face discrimination when it comes to resources such as funding, financing, technology and education (Kameshwara & Shukla, 2017).

Nielsen and Waldrop (2014) state that the Indian middle class is mostly made up of Muslims and high caste Hindus, which are the two groups that are viewed as the most gender conservative in the Indian society. However, according to the authors, these groups are at the same time valuing education and improved living standards, which leads to the rather contradictory situation where middle-class women are pursuing higher education but are at the same time expected to be maternal and homely. Yet, a group of young middle-class women, especially represented by students and career women in the IT and IT-enabled sectors, challenge traditional patriarchal high-caste gender structures only by taking part of the public sphere (Nielsen and Waldrop, 2014). Some of these women are to be found within Volvo Group IT India, and their experiences form a focal point of this Bachelor thesis.

## 3. Method

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*In this chapter, we will explain the method used in this study - how the material was gathered and analyzed as well as ethical reflections will be discussed.*

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### 3.1. Scientific Approach and Data Collection

This Bachelor thesis has been conducted using abductive reasoning. Semi-structured interviews have been performed and the results have been discussed and analyzed with support from earlier research in this area.

The material for our research have been collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data collected for this thesis consisted of 16 interviews. The secondary literature consisted of reports and earlier research - books as well as articles collected from databases such as Google Scholar, Libris and Chalmers Library. In addition, we have used material from Volvo Group IT as a secondary source.

Our interviews lasted approximately 40 minutes each. They were held as video calls through Volvo Group's internal conference network and Skype, where two group members interviewed the respondents while the remaining four group members took notes. To ensure that the gathered data was interpreted in the same way, all six group members were present, doing the same tasks during all the interviews. As per Volvo Group IT India's requests, the interviews were not recorded.

### 3.2. Selection of Respondents

Fägerlind (2012), who works with equality and diversity in both private and public sector, claims that all members of the organization should comprehend the gender equality work. Therefore, the respondents at Volvo Group IT in Bangalore consisted of 8 non-managerial staff members (IT Architects, Application Developers and Testers), 6 group and department managers, the HR-manager and the unit director.

We chose to interview both men and women at all corporate levels, with exception for the unit director and HR-manager since only one person occupy each of these positions. Of the 16 respondents, 7 were women and 9 were men. Since one common issue in India is that many women choose to not return to work after marriage and maternity leave (Venkatesh, 2015), we chose to



interview both married and unmarried respondents as well as respondents with and without children to have a diverse sample size among women. We let a representative from Volvo Group IT India select respondents according to our wishes, i.e. approximately 50 percent of each gender and 50 percent married whereof some with children. The HR-manager was interviewed to gain deeper insight in the recruitment process.

### 3.3. Designing Interviews

Since this thesis is of hermeneutic character, we chose to carry out qualitative interviews. The interviews were semi-structured, which gave the respondents the opportunity to develop their answers and interviewers the opportunity to ask follow-up questions. Still, it was our intention to ask almost the same questions to the respondents and ask our most crucial questions to all our respondents. A qualitative approach was appropriate since we wanted more profound answers than the ones that can be received from structured questionnaires.

Our interview templates were based on the book *Mångfald i praktiken (Diversity in Practice)* by Fägerlind (2012), the interview templates provided by Fransson and Windrup (2013) and other literature findings from the theoretical framework. Since workers at different levels in organizations have different responsibilities regarding policy implementation, recruitment and career advancement, we chose to develop interview templates with slightly different questions to respondents from different levels in the organization. We assumed that the unit director had the most insight in the formulation and implementation of the policies for gender equality and that the HR manager had most insights in recruitment, and we therefore chose to focus their interviews on each of these topics.

When creating the interview templates, the technique described by Gillham (2008) was used, that is to formulate all relevant questions and then group them together according to their themes. The questions were formulated as clearly and precisely as possible, and we avoided to ask several questions in one, which both Gillham (2008) and Dalen (2015) argue is important. The interview questions were divided into different themes such as personal background, Volvo Group IT's policies, recruitment, career advancement et cetera. Dividing the questions into themes made it easier for respondents and interviewers to stick to the specific theme, but also for us to interpret and analyze their answers. The interview templates for respondents from all different levels can be found in Appendix 1-5.

### 3.4. Data Analysis

After all the interviews were conducted, the notes were summarized according to the different themes. Thereafter, an abductive approach was used to interpret and analyze the collected data. An abductive method is according to Wallén (1996) appropriate in areas that are rather subjective and vague, and therefore are difficult to measure in a quantitative way. The findings were interpreted from a hermeneutic perspective, where the interview notes were read several times in order to get an overview of the findings.

### 3.5. Quality Assurance and Critical Reflections

The interview templates were validated by our supervisors prior to the interviews. Gillham (2008) argues that suggestions made by others are important when formulating interview templates. We were unfortunately not able to pilot the interviews. However, our supervisors commented on our findings after the first two interviews, in an attempt to further increase the reliability and quality of the interviews.

We are aware that the sample of respondents being chosen by a representative at Volvo Group IT India could undermine the results from our findings. Nevertheless, we hope that we would be able to see through inauthentic answers; at least we were carrying out the interviews bearing in mind the importance of being critical. In addition, it is our comprehension that the thesis would create higher value for Volvo Group IT if the respondent sample was of an authentic and representative character, and thus we suggest that so was the case.

There is a risk that we did not register all the data in the interviews, we did not register all the data in the interviews, since they were not recorded and transcribed. However, since four group members took notes, close to all information was hopefully obtained. After each interview, all group members discussed the respondents' answers and noted details and important findings, which according to Dalen (2015) strengthens the quality and reliability. There remains a risk that the respondents might have interpreted the interview questions differently, but we had this in mind during the interviews and the analysis. We therefore tried to clarify the questions when needed and were extra critical to the answers of such questions. Furthermore, we understand that the presence of all six group members during the interviews might have caused nervousness among our respondents. However, we suggest that the respondents were not affected in a way that challenges the validity of their answers since all respondents were talkative and did not seem uncomfortable with our interview questions.

Not all research in the theoretical framework has been based on multinational or Indian companies. An example is the study by Wyatt-Nichol and Antwi-Boasiako from 2012 presented in section 4.1., which focuses primarily on American state and local governments. In order to minimize the issue of relying on contextual findings, we have tried to use a wide range of literature and we thus argue that the used literature is applicable to the context of Volvo Group IT in Bangalore. Additionally, we have used literature from other research areas than gender equality to cover relevant aspects.

### 3.6. Ethical Reflections

It is important to protect the rights and the integrity of the respondents, to make sure that they do not take any damage by participating (Denscombe, 2009). In this thesis the ethical aspects have mainly considered the collection of data through interviews. During these interviews we have tried not to ask for sensitive or confidential information.

Another aspect of ethical character is the anonymity of the sources. We used two methods proposed by Thagaard (1998). Firstly, we have not used any of the interviewed persons' names. Secondly, we presented the opinion of several persons in each section based upon their corporate position to reach an anonymity of high quality. According to Öberg (2011), it is important to understand that ethical questions arise when interpreting and analyzing collected material. To avoid any problems with misinterpretations, the thesis was sent to Volvo Group IT in Bangalore and Volvo Group IT in Gothenburg for approval. Unfortunately, all respondents did not have the opportunity to look through the essay before publication.

The social policy researcher Rajan (2018) emphasizes the importance of listening rather than stereotyping or making assumptions when it comes to feminism and women's opinions. The author elaborates the importance of being open and listening to women's experiences and views, no matter the difference of one's own paradigm. While disregarding one's own paradigm and looking at things in a new light, the concept of a transnational point of view arises. Rajan argues that culture, not being monolithic, can offer insights and a diverse perspective for the continuance of development connected to women's rights. However, there is a difference between global north feminism and global south feminism which often includes an underlying condescending bias of one another. In contrast, Rajan states that cultural environments and practices in both parties are equally deeply harmful to women. The author therefore argues to strive for dialogue and interaction with mutual transformation, instead of convincing the other party of a certain morality.

Rajan (2018) further describes that translation of culture can be difficult and may involve incomplete or lacking communication. Lacking communication leads to unsuited implementation of Euro-American theories of feminism to other societies and communities. However, Rajan emphasizes that instead of trying to implement certain theories in another context, it is important to discover common viewpoints that can be built upon. In addition, she adds that there should be a transnational dialogue where both parties operate and interact in openness and acceptance of one another's perspective. During the process of creating this Bachelor thesis we have tried to take this transnational perspective into consideration to better understand a different culture.

Lastly, we have drawn the conclusions in this Bachelor thesis based on interviews and secondary sources. We have not visited the office in Bangalore and we are humble to face the fact that our thesis cannot, and will not, mirror the entire reality. We have become aware of the complexity of handling and researching subjects such as gender equality within organizations. However, we believe that we will contribute with our perspective on the matter of gender policy implementation in Volvo Group IT Bangalore.

## 4. Theoretical Framework

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*In this chapter, we will present earlier research that is relevant for the thesis. The three main topics are diversity and gender equality policies, recruitment and women's advancement in organizations. Firstly, diversity and gender equality policies and implementation strategies as well as success factors will be presented, followed by how to address gender equality in the recruitment process and finally an Indian perspective of female and male norms and opportunities for career advancement. The research presented in this chapter is based on both Indian and international research on diversity management, policy implementation in multinational companies, recruitment processes and theories about the Indian society.*

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### 4.1. Diversity and Gender Equality Policies

Wyatt-Nichol and Antwi-Boasiako (2012), who researches policy making in both public and private sector, have conducted studies on the topic of implementation of diversity initiatives. In their study, they present seven critical success factors that are necessary to successfully implement diversity initiatives. These include commitment to leadership, diversity as a part of the strategic plan, employee involvement, diversity training, accountability and measures, recruitment and succession planning. We have structured this section of our Bachelor thesis by presenting research on policy formulation and thereafter using the, by Wyatt-Nichol and Antwi-Boasiako, proposed success factors and supported these by using other secondary literature.

#### 4.1.1. Policy Formulation and Implementation

Lévesque et al. (2015) argue that the local adoption of multinational policies tends to be a difficult and complex process, and that the local implementation is much dependent on the local leaders. The local adaption is also highlighted by Almond et al. (2005), who claim that local leaders always will have some flexibility to implement their own agenda. According to Cooke et. al. (2010), multinational policies must be adapted differently in different parts of the world to work effectively at a local level, which is also confirmed by Björkman and Budhwar (2007).

Flexible working arrangements and other family- and women-friendly policy measures are key in gender equality work. Although, a shortage of women-friendly policies cannot explain the lack of women in higher positions in STEM (Muller et al., 2011). Moreover, HR-advisor Singh Deo (2009) argues that women-friendly workplace policies benefit not only women, but men as well. The author mentions an example of such women-friendly policy as flexible work arrangements, which allows for

more flexibility at the workplace and the possibility to work from home. Singh Deo further claims that flexible work arrangements are used more frequently by men than women.

According to Keinert-Kisin, whose research primarily focuses on business ethics and gender studies, organizations must have an internal system for preventing and remedying sexual harassment to avoid any legal liability. Thus, the internal system for preventing sexual harassment is not only a moral obligation, but also a legal one (Keinert-Kisin, 2016). Singh (2016), an Indian women's studies scholar, claims that addressing sexual harassment is one important component when trying to minimize sex-based discrimination, as sexual harassment is a way to undermine the capabilities of women at the workplace. Moreover, the author argues that working against sexual harassment is especially important in India where the gender bias is strongly rooted.

#### 4.1.2. Commitment to Leadership

According to Wyatt-Nichol and Antwi-Boasiako (2012), leaders and managers play the most important role when implementing policies within an organization. They are responsible for the implementation and must demonstrate commitment to diversity and create an environment where policies can be implemented to fully and effectively succeed. Woodrow (2014) suggests that local managers can implement policies more easily if they are supported in doing so from higher organizational levels. Woodrow also suggests that it is important to consider who is responsible for implementation and who is likely to evaluate its effectiveness.

A study presented by Cooke and Saini (2010), human resource management scholars, shows that most non-HR-managers claim that diversity management is not an issue in their organizations. The HR-managers see diversity as already being embedded in their culture and think that they thus do not need a formal diversity management policy. One of the respondents in Cooke and Saini's study suggested that India is a diverse population and that the Indian workforce in general is said to be tolerant. Therefore, the necessity for introducing a formal policy to address diversity issues is not always seen. The leaders' and managers' approach and commitment to diversity management is therefore important to effectively implement diversity management policies, especially in countries such as India where the population already is perceived as diverse (Cooke & Saini, 2010). The leaders set the bar and determine if the implementation is taken seriously rather than treated like a marginal activity (Woodrow, 2014).

### 4.1.3. Part of the Strategic Plan

Although most managers have an outspoken goal regarding gender equality, there appears to be a gap between the goal and the real, concrete actions (Benchop et al., 2015, Goldberg, n.d.). The gap is bigger if managers regard diversity as a goal that is separate from the organization's overall objectives (Goldberg, n.d.).

There are several strategies that can be used to link diversity to the strategic plan, according to Wyatt-Nichol and Antwi-Boasiako (2012). One is to track workforce characteristics and establish both short- and long-term goals. Another strategy is to link diversity to goals and objectives within the strategic plan. Other than that, organizations can develop action plans or integrate diversity into leadership training programs (Wyatt-Nichol and Antwi-Boasiako, 2012).

### 4.1.4. Employee Involvement

According to Wyatt-Nichol and Antwi-Boasiako (2012), employee involvement is a key factor in a successful policy implementation, since it will lead to a larger internal support, an increased feeling of legitimacy among the employees, and a larger sense of ownership. Singh Deo (2009) claims that a key factor in employee involvement is creating an environment where people from all backgrounds can be heard and understood. Shapiro (2000), researcher in employee engagement, highlights the need for members of all demographic groups to participate equally, so that all groups get their voices heard. The importance of employee involvement is also highlighted by Yang and Konrad (2011), who researches management and organizational behavior. Yang and Konrad claim that there is a strong link between diversity management and employee involvement practices. Grosser and Moon (2005), researchers in corporate social responsibility, further argue the need for both women and men to be able to influence the development and evaluation of the policy making. They claim that participation is crucial to identify and address how organizational structures can, both directly and indirectly, cause discrimination.

### 4.1.5. Diversity Training

According to psychologists Pendry, Driscoll and Field (2007) diversity training differs from diversity management since diversity training does not necessarily change the underlying structure. Instead, diversity training is mostly a tool to decrease discrimination. The authors state that diversity trainings can make the participants understand why gender diversity is important. Moreover, diversity trainings can be used to decrease prejudice and bias, but it can be challenging since prejudice usually is difficult to change (Pendry, Driscoll & Field, 2007). Diversity training is important to make sure that employees of different groups can collaborate effectively (Wyatt-Nichol and Antwi-Boasiako, 2012).

Wyatt-Nichol and Antwi-Boasiako (2012) state that many organizations mistakenly see diversity training as a one-time event and not a continuous process. Another common mistake described by the authors is to not provide employees with tools and practical skills when dealing with diversity issues and instead only raise awareness. Pendry, Driscoll and Field (2007) further claim that the diversity training initiative is often seen as successful, even when assessment is lacking or inadequate. The authors argue that lack of assessment is usually due to a lack of expertise in evaluation or a lack of time or money.

#### 4.1.6. Accountability and Measures

Measures are an important factor in policy implementation, as stated by Wyatt-Nichol and Antwi-Boasiako (2012), not only to measure progress but also to assess the starting situation and to see what problems the organization might face when working with the implementation. Measures can, as argued by the authors, be used to hold managers accountable and can include not only more traditional demographics in recruitment, selection and promotion, but also surveys over employee satisfaction, attendance of diversity trainings, perceptions of organizational supports and the number of complaints during specific time periods. Keinert-Kisin (2016) argues that a key factor for a successful implementation is setting specific, measurable targets.

There are opposing views regarding the effects of female representation on high managerial levels. Bukhari and Sharma (2014) argue that if women are not included or represented at higher levels in the organization, they will not have any influence in the decision making or policy establishing. While Dhameja and Aggarwal (2014) claim that female representation on all levels is desirable, they recommend not using forced quotas for the gender diversity ratio, as companies benefit from appointing primarily based on competence and skill. Instead, Dhameja and Aggarwal's recommendation is to set goals for the percentage of female employees that are desirable in the future on different levels and to use measurable objectives.

Keinert-Kisin (2016) argues that adding more women to the hierarchical top might not be a very efficient way of imposing gender equality in an organization. The goal is usually, according to the author, to increase the number of women in higher positions since they are thought to bring a more feminine perspective to the team. However, a study presented by the author shows that women do not make significantly different decisions than men and that the idea of women having a stronger moral compass regarding the issue of gender equality fails. Keinert-Kisin claims that it is thus not merely enough to add women to the hierarchical top. Moreover, Varma and Kapur (2015), professors in science, technology studies, and computer science, claim that female role models at the hierarchical



top might not be needed for Indian women to stay in computing and engineering. Instead, Varma and Kapur argue that the difficulties Indian women face when pursuing a career in computing is connected to insufficient resources and opportunities.

#### 4.1.7. Recruitment

Wyatt-Nichol and Antwi-Boasiako (2012) state that recruitment is an important factor in diversity work. The recruitment strategy must reach out to diverse populations to obtain a diverse workforce, and the recruitment and promotion processes must be fair (Gröschl & Doherty, 2018). It is in the recruitment the opportunity to create an equal gender ratio exists (Ng, 2017). Brewster, Wood and Brookes (2008) extend this view by suggesting that retention also should be considered, as different employees need different benefits at different points in their lives. Additionally, organizations can attract non-traditional applicants by exposing that they value diversity (Goldberg, n.d.).

Recruitment and its impact on diversity will be further discussed in section 4.2.

#### 4.1.8. Succession Planning

Succession planning is highlighted as a key factor in diversity management by Wyatt-Nichol and Antwi-Boasiako (2012). Succession planning is the process of finding qualified or developing candidates who can replace those in key roles within the company when they leave, retire, or pass away (Heatfield, 2018). Wyatt-Nichol and Antwi-Boasiako and Heatfield argue that succession planning brings advantages to both employees and employers since employees get the possibility to advance in the organization and employers are ensured a qualified diverse pool of executive candidates which facilitates the recruitment process. Therefore, succession planning is important in all organizations, but especially in organizations where the staff turnover is high (Wyatt-Nichol & Antwi-Boasiako, 2012).

### 4.2. How to Achieve a Gender Equal Recruitment Process

A study conducted by Lundin and Aarnivaara (2013) implies that the foundation of equal conditions between genders is initiated in the recruitment process, and to accomplish a more equal workspace, a recruitment process without discrimination needs to take place. In the section below, we present results from their study, as well as additional international literature and empirical research of how gender equality can be addressed in the recruitment process.

#### 4.2.1. Recruitment Procedures and the Question of Competence

According to Lindelöw et al. (2012), researchers in psychology and management, competency-based recruitment means that companies clearly define the skills sought for the specific position in the recruitment process, making competence the only factor that controls the decision. Thus, Lindelöw et al. claim that subjective assessments and other factors such as gender and age should be removed to the greatest possible extent. When designing a competency-based recruitment process it is important that companies and organizations firstly carry out a so-called needs analysis, according to Lundin and Aarnivaara (2013). The authors state that when conducting the needs analysis, the organization examines the skills and requirements needed for the open position.

Lundin and Aarnivaara (2013) claim that competence is usually divided into two categories: formal and informal. Formal competence includes experiences, education and qualifications and thus is measurable (Antilla, 2001; Ellström, 1992). Skorstad (2011), researcher in organizational psychology, claims that the informal competence consists of personal qualities that are more difficult to measure. The author further suggest that the informal competence take more time to develop and can be a result of personal social background and environmental conditions.

Hallén (2005), researcher in management and organizational change, and Lundin and Aarnivaara (2013) state that after conducting the needs analysis the process of completing a competency profile starts. Hallén argues that a competency profile of an intended candidate must correspond to the wishes and demands of the organization with regard to education, work experience, knowledge requirements, personality and development potential. Lindelöw (2016) claims that a well-implemented and well-considered competency profile has consistently clear requirements and wishes which form a basis for the entire recruitment process. Further, the author argues that it is important to not have unnecessary requirements since it might prevent candidates from applying for the position. Danielsson (2010) and Ahrenborg Swensson (1997) argue that it is important that companies are aware of the skills needed to perform the duties. Otherwise, there is a risk that the recruitment group searches for a target group that does not have the appropriate skills or qualifications (Ahrenborg Swensson, 1997; Danielsson, 2010).

#### 4.2.2. Minimizing Discrimination During the Interview Process

A central part of the recruitment process is the interview itself. It is a meeting where the candidate's suitability for the job is assessed by the recruiter (Rashmi, 2010). According to Lundin and Aarnivaara (2013), companies should use a clear policy regarding their interview process. By using a clear policy, all applicants will have a similar interview process. Danielsson (2010) explains several potential pitfalls with the interview process, one being the risk of exposing the applicant for

unconscious bias. Further, it is stated that it is beneficial to have a diverse recruitment group (Lundin & Aarnivaara, 2013; Fägerlind, 2012).

To secure and increase the chances of employing the right person, different tests can be used (Lundin & Aarnivaara, 2013). Tests decrease the risk of discrimination since it gives the applicant the opportunity to show several of his or her qualifications (Diskrimineringsombudsmannen, 2016). Rashmi (2010), an Indian HR researcher, states that different variants of tests measure different qualities, and that companies can use both skill and personality tests. According to Rashmi, skill tests measure a candidate's ability to solve complex problems in different work situations, whereas personality tests focus more on the person's behavior in a working environment.

Forde (2001), researcher in employment relations, claims that organizations can hire a recruitment agency to conduct parts of the recruitment process. With the help from a recruitment agency, the organization can save time, reduce stress among recruiters and compensate for their potential lack of knowledge regarding the recruitment process. Forde mentions that an advantage with recruitment agencies is that they can help with the construction of competency profiles and formulate as well as communicate the advert.

#### 4.2.3. Affirmative Action as a Strategy

According to Taylor and Hood (2010), researchers in organizational behavior, many women underestimate their ability, which inhibits them in their career. In addition, women often must work harder than their male counterparts to get a similar job (Derks et. al, 2016). Affirmative action can be a strategy for reducing this problem (Jämställdhetsombudsmannen, 2014). Affirmative action refers to a group who carry similar competence as the majority-group but is considered underprivileged and therefore is given priority when designating a role in the workplace (Jämställdhetsombudsmannen, 2014). Kellough (2006), specialist in public personnel management, suggests that affirmative action should be considered a step in the right direction to achieve more gender equal organizations and better gender distribution within the foreseeable future. Åsard and Runblom (2000), researchers in political science, and Boonin (2011), psychologist, argue that there is a weaker and a stronger type of affirmative action. They claim that weak affirmative action aims to reduce discrimination in organizations, which is done by for example having minority groups receive scholarships and be the target group of advertisement. Strong affirmative action means giving a certain category of people priority to a job or place of education, even though there are more qualified applicants from other groups (Åsard & Runblom, 2000; Boonin, 2011).

The critics claim that affirmative action makes all groups suffer (Glazer, 1988). One argument against affirmative action is that it leads to “reverse discrimination” and has the effect that the most qualified strength is not prioritized (Matheson et al., 2000). According to Kellough (2006) and Matheson et al. (2000), women who are hired because of their gender disparege their qualifications and competence. Some critics neglect that the ones recruited through affirmative action have to be as competent as the others, when evaluated according to similar principles for the required as well as the preferred skills for each employment (Lundin & Aarnivaara, 2013). Matheson et al. (2000) explain further that the aim of affirmative action is not just to reach an equal numeric representation of women and minorities, but to encourage diversity, qualifications and competences to become a built-in part of promotion strategies.

#### 4.2.4. Internal Contra External Recruitment

According to Thoms (2005), researcher in HR and organizational behavior, an obvious difference between an internal and external candidate is that the internal candidate is familiar with the organization and has knowledge of both the positive and negative aspects of the open position. The author also states that the internal candidate’s familiarity with the company is an advantage with internal recruitment. Thoms claims that is advantage is two-sided since the organization has knowledge about the internal candidate and can make future performance predictions based on previous experience. In addition, the internal recruitment process is quicker, cheaper and more simple than external recruitment (Thoms, 2005). Bradley (2006), who studies micro level aspects of people's experience of the workplace, highlights that promotion is a good motivational tool for employees. There are however, also disadvantages with internal recruitment as it limits the company’s options to the number of current employees with the right qualifications and competence (Thoms, 2005; Jämställdhetsombudsmannen, 2014). Furthermore, the internal candidates might not be investigated as thoroughly as external candidates (Jämställdhetsombudsmannen, 2014).

#### 4.2.5. Targeted Advertisement to Attract Female Applicants

Two common ways to find candidates for an open position are to actively search for candidates to find someone with the right competence and to advertise the position and hope that a qualified candidate turns up (Thoms, 2005). Thoms (2005) and Kellough (2006) suggest that advertisement targeted towards women could make it easier to increase the ratio of women and average out the imbalance between majority and minority.

According to Avery and McKay (2006), global research show that there is a difference between men and women when they choose workplace. The authors claim that women tend to value diversity and good working conditions. They explain that important preferences when women are choosing where

to work are balance between family life and work, that the employment is secure in the long run and possibilities to further education. For men however, Avery and McKay state that the most crucial preference is a competitive salary.

### 4.3. Advancing in Organizations

Bukhari and Sharma (2014), researchers in the field of HR, inform that Indian women historically have been delegated to part-time jobs, fewer working hours or tasks with lower responsibility, due to the societal expectations of them taking care of their families. The authors explain how this led to women quitting their job as soon as they got married or pregnant. The sections below will therefore include research about the standards, norms and the comprehension of men and women to investigate the opportunities of advancing within organizations.

#### 4.3.1. Indian Women's Educational and Career Choice

Nakray (2018), who researches within sociology and policies, explicates how India's history of multicultural, multi-religious and multi-ethnic society with its caste and gender hierarchy have determined the future life chances of Indian children. The social exclusion formed upon these variables creates barriers to education, and this seems to be especially true for girls (Nakray, 2018). Gupta (2012), a researcher in the field of Indian women in STEM, describes barriers for women attending studies in science and engineering. There is mainly a fear of travelling alone at odd hours during the study period, why parents often also choose nearby schools rather than the better schools. The author also states that engineering studies require a significant amount of time, energy and money. The economic issue is fundamental, while the amount of required time can be eased with help from the family by being freed from household responsibilities (Gupta, 2012).

The Indian professor of career development and management Gokuladas (2010) states, in a study based on Indian students in computer science, that the choice of career in India is a matching process between personal needs and the most suitable field. Subjective factors are suggested to have a higher role for the first choice of career and company. Still, the author argues that there are many factors influencing the career decision such as job market conditions or even attitudes acquired during the childhood. For example, Gokuladas emphasize that Indian citizens learn to prioritize the requirements of their families over their own needs during their childhood.

Gupta (2012) explains how the patrifocal structure historically have restricted women's education in India, meaning the educational choice being a family decision in India. This statement is also supported in Gokuladas' (2010) study, where management students were found to be mostly

influenced by their fathers in their career choice. Varma and Kapur (2015) found that most of their student respondents credited their male family members for influencing their decision to study.

#### 4.3.2. Standards and Norms of Masculine and Feminine

McKinsey & Company (2016) further elaborates that maternal and homely ideals can be substantiated by the fact that Indian women in average do ten times as much unpaid work as Indian men do, while globally the corresponding number is three. Furthermore, Bukhari and Sharma (2014) argue that there exists biases and notions about women being less physically, mentally or emotionally capable than men. However, the authors suggest that these kinds of norms are changing in the Indian society, where women are generally no longer seen as subordinate to men due to recent debates on feminism. Still, the authors state that this is an ongoing process in several organizations who slowly adapt to these changes and learn the art of gender equality.

In the study of norms and practices in the workplace, Gupta (2017) finds that there are several mechanisms that help maintain masculinity. Firstly, there are norms and practices that favor men in the workplace. Secondly, Gupta states that there are Indian socio-cultural norms and stereotypes which in general bring a devaluation of women in public spaces. The author argues that constructing and maintaining masculine norms at work prevents women's opportunities to reach higher positions.

Gupta (2017) describes how masculine and feminine norms are propagated by workplace cultures. The author mentions the masculine concept of the *ideal worker*, which involves a complete devotion to work by staying late and continuously being available. The concept does not, however, consider the duty or responsibility to care for children and the family. While commenting the engineering field as being generally seen as the "men's sphere", Gupta (2012) explains that women are underrepresented in these fields both globally and in India. Still, the author highlights that there has been an increase in the participation of women in engineering education in India. The sociologist Venkatesh (2015) informs that there are no issues with the enrollment of women in engineering studies, since the ratio is equal between men and women. The author describes that there instead is a problem with the participation in the labor market, where the number of women dropping out is mostly due to the societal pressure and norms of women and their family role.

Varma and Kapur (2015) find in their study that computer science and IT-related jobs are viewed as being woman-friendly by both men and women. Further, the authors suggest that these jobs help boost the women's confidence and obtain independence from their families due to high salaries. In addition, Gupta (2012) emphasizes that the male members of the family view these IT-related jobs as secure and suitable for women since they do not require physical strength, but only mental skills. On the

other hand, Gupta (2017) argues that even though the computer science and IT-sector have been in the frontline in India when it comes to gender diversity, women are usually demoted to routinized tasks.

Gupta (2017) argues that there might be difficulties recognizing gender biases in practices and tasks at a workplace. However, gender biases are stated to lead to norms and ideas of women's and men's roles, both in the workplace and in everyday life, which eventually lead to further notions about the genders.

### 4.3.3. Differences in Masculine and Feminine Leadership

Bukhari and Sharma (2014) suggest that the difference in the enrollment of engineering studies between men and women is starting to be fully erased in India. Also, the amount of middle level female managers in India is growing in the engineering field (Bukhari & Sharma, 2014). However, Bukhari and Sharma state that the rate of advancement to management positions and higher corporate levels still is slow. Further, the researchers state that there are only a few women in top level positions in organizations, meaning that women are being disadvantaged. Additionally, there are some studies discussed by the authors that show a decrease of women in top level positions.

Social policy scholar Anand (2014) confirms the challenges that Indian women meet when reaching for management roles and higher-level positions. Anand suggest that the women ratio is low in both the private and the public sector. The author recognizes several barriers at individual, social and organizational level that hinder women in India from reaching management positions. The individual barriers comprise of personal characteristics, behavior and traits which lay the foundation for self-esteem, performance and the independence needed in men-dominated workplaces. The author also suggests that these barriers include the balance of work and family responsibilities. The social barriers that Anand mentions refer to the expectations and notions of the role and responsibilities of the genders. Since the management role is mostly associated with masculine norms and behaviors, it raises barriers for women to take on this role with feminine behaviors. Lastly, Anand defines organizational barriers as discriminatory policies and practices that limit women's role in decision-making. The author also states that there might exist resistance from male coworkers of women becoming leaders, which could indicate less respect towards female leaders. In addition, Anand suggests that the absence of policies securing the participation of women in the organization might also lead to unnecessary barriers.

Anand (2014) claims that there are several assumptions of women in management in India. Women are for instance expected to have a masculine style in their leadership, which can be referred to as being assertive like men. Anand further suggests that women are leaders with a genuineness and a

different attitude in their leadership; they supposedly bring better management in crisis situations and can act in a more gender-neutral manner. Meanwhile, Gupta (2017) states that the assumptions of women's leadership give rise to a trade-off situation for women. Either they can choose to adjust their leadership in a masculine matter or choose to pursue a feminine leadership, which is stereotypically seen as warm and nurturing. To clarify, Gupta highlights this trade-off between being disliked or being liked but not respected.

#### 4.3.4. Biases of Behavior and Leadership Styles

In the late 1990's, a study examined the relationship between sex role stereotypes and characteristics perceived as necessary for managerial success. The study was conducted by organizational psychologists and leadership researchers Lituchy, Liu, Mueller and Schein (1996) and was carried out among Japanese and Chinese students. The result found was that both female and male students perceived that successful middle managers possessed characteristics, attitudes and temperaments more commonly ascribed to men than to women. According to Lituchy et al. similar studies had earlier been conducted in the U.S., Great Britain and Germany, giving similar results suggesting that this is, or at least was in the late 90s', a global issue.

Anand (2014) states that women who have managerial aspirations may find that their style and behavior may not be in line with their societal roles. Moreover, Lituchy et al. proposed in 1996 that the phenomenon that made people think of a man when they thought of a manager seemed to be more prominent among men than among women. Lituchy et al. suggested that men were more prone to think of managers as men. The differences in how much men and women connected leadership to masculinity implied that if there were no structural limitations to bias, male decision makers were more likely to favor the male candidate (Lituchy et al., 1996). The phenomenon that makes people think of a man when they think of a manager can therefore foster bias through this psychological barrier (Lituchy et al., 1996). More recent studies suggest that this phenomenon is still prevalent (Ayman et al., 2009).

Soyeon and Mannsoo (2017) describe transformational leadership as a motivation process that encourages subordinates to be actively engaged in working within an organization. It is believed that transformational leadership is an effective leadership (Ayman et al., 2009) and that women tend to be more prone to present a transformational leadership (Soyeon & Mannsoo, 2017). However, a study conducted in Canada by psychologists Ayman, Korabik and Morris (2009) suggests that female managers and male managers are judged differently depending on their self-rated tendency to behave in a more transformational manner. The result indicated that female leaders who behave in a transformational manner have their leadership skills devalued by their male subordinates. However,



the same does not hold when the subordinate is a woman - then transformational manners were positively mirrored in the performance rating. On the other hand, male leaders with self-rated transformational manners could see how both their female and male subordinates rated their performance high (Ayman et al., 2009). When discussing their findings Ayman et al. (2009) suggest that when men display individualized consideration, a subset of transformational leadership, it leads them to lose some status without losing their legitimacy as a leader. The authors suggest that the opposite would be true if a female leader did the same.

Madsen and Schibner (2017) suggest that the unconscious gender biases in organizations are usually not acknowledged, and that it is especially true in the field of cross-cultural and international management studies. Ayman et al. (2009) additionally suggest that their findings attest why women must work harder to reach the same level of recognition as men. According to Keinert-Kisin (2016), the unconscious gender bias tends to make people overrate men's contribution and underrate the contribution of women when working in teams. The underestimation of women works as a threat to the advancement of the female employees and can be counteracted by written assessments that are structured and rationalized (Keinert-Kisin, 2016). Ayman et al. (2009) state that tools such as 360-degree feedback could be helpful for female leaders to sense others' sensing of their behavior. From a more organizational perspective, diversity training and bias-free criteria for decision making could help an organization to outplay gender bias (Ayman et al., 2009).

## 5. Data and Analysis

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*In this chapter, the results of the interviews will be presented and analyzed with respect to the theoretical framework presented in the chapter above. The aim is to understand how Volvo Group IT works with gender equality at the workplace and how the employees at Volvo Group IT in Bangalore perceive gender equality and diversity initiatives.*

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### 5.1. Diversity and Gender Equality Policies

#### 5.1.1. Volvo Group's Official Policies

Two of Volvo Group's official policies, that are closely connected to diversity and gender equality, are mutual respect and non-discrimination. Volvo Group states in the Code of Conduct (2018) that the organization is proud to have an inclusive work environment, since it promotes a supportive environment and encourages growth of individual and strong teams. Volvo Group states that mutual respect among all employees and business partners are encouraged and expected, that an offensive environment should be avoided and that any inappropriate behavior should be objected. Volvo Group also claims that hiring managers should observe applicable laws against discrimination. In the Code of Conduct, it is stated that the company values a diverse workforce, and that diversity and inclusion help build trust, drive the performance and bring out the best in people. There should be no discrimination - candidates should only be evaluated based on relevant factors such as talent, skill and experience. Employees are encouraged to report any occurrence of discrimination.

According to AB Volvo's sustainability report from 2017 (2018a), Volvo Group connects values to diversity and inclusion, since these increase innovation and engagement of the employees. In addition, it is argued that a main factor for success is for everyone in the organization to understand how diversity strengthens the company. Therefore, each leader in every corporate group is given the responsibility for maintaining diversity and pursuing an inclusive leadership, and thereby make it part of everyday operations. In AB Volvo's sustainability report, it is stated that diversity is a global competitive force that must be handled locally since different places have different diversity challenges.

### 5.1.2. Thoughts on Gender Equality at Volvo Group IT India

All respondents in our interviews primarily defined gender equality in an organization by stating that equal opportunities should be given to both genders. One non-managerial respondent emphasized the importance of having the right mindset and stated that there can be gender equality even if the ratio of men and women is uneven.

*When we say gender equality, it's not only with the numbers, it is more about the mindset. There can be gender equality even if the proportion of women is smaller. Gender equality cannot be measured.*

- Male non-manager

The non-managerial staff members described the environment at Volvo Group IT in Bangalore as open, and they appreciated being able to discuss issues with anyone, including people several steps up in the organizational hierarchy. Openness like this is a key factor in employee involvement according to the literature (Singh Deo, 2009). Three respondents also brought up that this openness makes Volvo Group IT in Bangalore feel like a flat hierarchy. In the Code of Conduct (2018) it is stated that the employees can raise concerns not only to their closest managers, but also higher managers or the HR department. Thus, we think that the flat hierarchy is common for the entire corporate group and does not only exist in Bangalore. Based on the interviews, such flat hierarchy seems unusual in other Indian companies, and we believe this could perhaps reflect the Swedish workplace hierarchy, which is often quite flat and open. The organizational similarities to Swedish workplaces might not only be because Volvo Group originally is a Swedish company, but also that the unit director previously has worked in Sweden.

When the respondents were asked to define a gender diverse workplace, there was somewhat of a difference between the answers of men and women. In our opinion, several men seemed to mostly focus on diversity in broader terms, including geographical region, sexual orientation, and age, even when asked specifically of gender diversity. While still understanding other issues related to diversity, women instead tended to focus their answers more on gender equality.

*Gender diversity is just one of the topics when you talk about diversity. Diversity can also be other things, for instance countries, geographical regions, ethnicity, backgrounds, sexual orientation, age, et cetera. Diversity is core, and gender diversity is only one part that they support at Volvo.*

- Male manager

### 5.1.3. Familiarity and Unfamiliarity with the Gender Policies

Mixed answers were registered when we asked the non-managerial respondents if they were familiar with Volvo Group's gender equality policy. Five of the respondents were at first unfamiliar, or only vaguely familiar with the policy and three claimed that they were familiar. However, when we briefly explained further, all respondents seemed familiar with the policy. The unfamiliarity we registered might thus not be connected to a lack of understanding of the policy contents, but rather to the non-managerial staff not seeing it as an outspoken policy. The policies seemed to be successfully implemented because even though many employees did not know Volvo Group's official policies, they described the environment as if the policies have been well integrated into the organization.

*I haven't read it specifically, but I understand that it is important that there is no discrimination. I experience that everyone has the same opportunities, not based on gender.*

- Female non-manager

When the respondents who stated that they were familiar with the policy were asked to define the core of Volvo Group's gender equality, several claimed that Volvo Group puts emphasis on keeping a good ratio. They stated that there should be no discrimination, equal opportunities should be given to members of both genders and that competence should rule. These answers coincide with Volvo Group's Code of Conduct (2018), which implies that the corporate policies are, at least somewhat, known among the employees.

Several respondents of both genders claimed that Volvo Group IT have female-friendly policies. The female-friendly policies help employees manage the work-life-balance through allowing flexibility to work from home, extended maternity leave and economic support for something called crèche, which is a kindergarten for employees to leave their children at. As a safety measure, Volvo Group IT India also helps female employees with transportation when working late. A female manager claimed that Volvo Group IT's policies are much more female-friendly than those of other Indian companies.

### 5.1.4. The Importance of Gender Equality

*Men and women work differently and have different opinions. If you put restrictions you are limiting the resources of potential and talent.*

- Female non-manager

The main benefits of focusing on gender equality were according to our respondents that diversity brings different opinions and ideas since men and women perceive things differently. Men and women's different strengths are mentioned by Anand (2014), who claims that women have better

abilities to understand and comprehend problems and situations. The employees suggested that there are differences between men and women and that women often are better at multitasking and conflict resolution and have more patience than men. On the other hand, men were described as better at interacting but having problems working with the same tasks for longer periods of time. Even though the qualities attributed to women through the interviews are desired qualities, we think that by saying that women have certain qualities, there could also be a risk to increase the gender-based bias that women face.

*Women are good at work, men are good at interaction. Women are not always better, men are not always better. Women go on maternity leaves, men can often work late. In order to have a good work-life, there has to be a good balance between men and women.*

- Female non-manager

Diversity was a key factor for a healthy and strong organization for all respondents at the Bangalore office. One manager argued that more diverse groups have higher productivity. The connection between diversity and higher productivity is also supported by Fägerlind (2012). One of the respondents argued that there is better learning and better collaboration between groups when there is gender equality and diversity. Moreover, many respondents stated that it is important to have a good balance between both genders not only for higher productivity, but also for practical reasons. Men were, for example, said to be able to stay at work later, partly because of the differences in home responsibilities but also since it was said to be unsafe for women to travel late.

All 16 respondents had an opinion on why gender equality is important. According to one manager, there are campaigns at Volvo Group where they try to raise awareness to their employees as to how gender equality can help the organization. However, it might be beneficial for Volvo Group IT India to further inform their employees about the link between gender equality and higher return on equity as presented by Fägerlind (2012). Such education might make gender diversity more strongly connected to the objectives of the organization, which is a strategy to successfully implement the policies according to Wyatt-Nichol and Antwi-Boasiako (2012). The authors further argue that diversity policies are much more likely to be neglected when funds are tight if diversity is considered as separate from the organization's overall strategic plan. The risk of neglecting diversity policies at Volvo Group seems at the moment small since we saw big commitment from managers, especially on higher levels in the organization. However, we think that there might be a risk of less focus on gender equality if these committed managers would leave the organization and not everyone are aware of the benefits of gender equality for the organization.

### 5.1.5. Flexible Policy Making

According to one male manager, the policy making at Volvo Group is decentralized to some extent. It was stated that they are provided with some guidelines from the headquarter in Sweden, but the local leaders have the possibility to influence and adapt the policies to the local circumstances in India. The male manager further stated that there are no definite measures from Sweden to increase the ratio of women. The heads of Volvo Group IT India establish their own goals and local policies. During the interviews we found that two of the local policies were an extended maternity leave with full salary from three to six months and the possibility to work from home five days every month. Volvo Group's sustainability report from 2017 supports this flexibility. Such flexible policy making is consistent with Almond et al. (2005), Cooke et al. (2010) and Björkman and Budhwar's (2007) studies, who claim that multinational companies must adapt their multinational policies to the local circumstances. Although, one must understand that it places great responsibility on the local leaders, which we see as problematic since it requires that they take the issue of gender equality seriously.

A male manager stated that there are some undocumented policies since it is necessary to have some exceptions based on the criticality of the situation, which makes it difficult to have strict policies. As an example, he mentioned that one employee was allowed an extended maternity leave after a difficult child delivery. Keinert-Kisin (2016) argues that undocumented policies can be problematic since they are not effective in battling gender discrimination. Additionally, we think that undocumented policies may lead to employees not getting the same possibilities.

### 5.1.6. Policy Implementation

There does not seem to exist a clear plan on how to implement the gender equality policies in the Bangalore office. One female manager thought of the implementation as something that happens naturally if the employees have the right mindset. Her approach seems to be common by non-HR-managers in countries such as India where the population already is diverse, according to Cooke et al. (2010). However, we see potential risks with the female manager's approach. One is that it eventually could lead to a decreased focus and the thought of diversity as a matter of course. It might also complicate further improvements and evaluation of the progress. Wyatt-Nichol and Antwi-Boasiako (2012) argue that the leaders are responsible for the implementation and must demonstrate commitment to diversity and create an environment where policies can be implemented to fully and effectively succeed. Almond et al. (2005) claim that local leaders always will have some flexibility to implement their own agenda. Thus, relying much on local leaders seems common and unavoidable in multinational organizations because of the need for adaptation. However, even though the respondents mentioned that Volvo Group IT's focus on diversity has increased during the last few years, we think it is worrying that the managers think of the implementation as something that happens naturally. To

reduce the leaders' responsibility, we think that Volvo Group IT could benefit from producing explicit guidelines and a clear implementation plan.

*If we employ the right people, the policy will be followed automatically. We will never hire someone who is not inclusive, who do not want to follow the policy. Policies cannot be implemented without the people. I never feel like "today I have to work with gender diversity".*

- Female manager

Six of the managers claimed that it is mainly in the recruitment process that the policy implementation occurs, arguing that the ratio of men and women can be balanced in this process. Although the importance of recruitment when implementing the gender equality policies might be true to some extent, we think that it can be problematic to rely too much on recruitment and to not consider other aspects. Other parts of the gender equality policies, such as no discrimination, cannot be implemented through the recruitment process alone.

One manager claimed that she, as a woman, had to work on increasing the ratio and help her female subordinates since she is familiar with the struggles they face based on their gender. However, according to Keinert-Kisin (2016), women are in general prone to the same gender biases as their male peers. Even though it is likely that female managers are more familiar with the struggles their female subordinates are facing, we argue that it is not enough to think that the female managers alone can achieve a gender equal organization. The gender bias must be addressed and understood by everyone in the organization, which we will discuss further in section 5.3.3.

There seems to be several initiatives and activities at the Bangalore office, such as Swedish "fika" and games, to encourage collaboration and networking between groups. Activities can according to Yang and Konrad (2011) be used to minimize prejudice through building contacts between different formal and informal groups. However, Yang and Konrad argue that both men and women must participate equally in these activities, otherwise the results may be the opposite of the intended. The managers play a crucial role here, as described by Shapiro (2000), who states that it is up to the managers to encourage and help members of all different demographic groups to participate in involvement programs, and that inadequate managerial skills will lead to an involvement gap. Nonetheless, according to the interviews there seems to be participation from both men and women, and the activities were described as appreciated by respondents of both genders.

When we asked about how gender policy work is integrated in the organizational goals and objectives, a male manager answered that the organizational goals and gender diversity are the same at the end of the day and that they therefore do not have any specific goals for men or women. Further, the manager stated that diversity can help to achieve the organizational goals since diverse groups tend to come up with innovative ideas. The manager's approach is in line with what is written in Volvo Group's Sustainability report from 2017, where it is stated that diversity and inclusion boost innovation (AB Volvo, 2018a). Volvo Group's strategy is similar to one described by Wyatt-Nichol and Antwi-Boasiako (2012), that is; organizations can develop action plans or integrate diversity into leadership training programs. Thus, diversity is a part of the strategic plan at Volvo Group even though there are no outspoken specific short- or long-term goals.

*We don't have any specific measure, we don't strictly go after a specific metric that is followed up regularly. If there is a man or woman with the best qualification, we go for that candidate regardless of the gender. There is no strict policy of hiring a specific gender - only a consciousness on that we should have a good mix of genders.*

- Male manager

### 5.1.7. Leadership Commitment

The leaders at Volvo Group IT India in Bangalore have shown commitment to diversity by many of the initiatives mentioned in Wyatt-Nichol and Antwi-Boasiako's (2012) study, including; inclusion of diversity topics at meetings, mentoring, involvement in diversity training, funding, recognition of diversity champions, personal involvement in training et cetera. Moreover, there is a yearly diversity and inclusion week where employees get to share their experiences with each other. The diversity and inclusion week started in year 2014 and is common for the entire corporate group (AB Volvo, 2018a). The company offers mandatory workshops for both managers and employees every sixth month, where they discuss issues related to gender equality such as sexual harassment and how they can handle them. They also offer voluntary e-training for all employees. As studies in the field show (Wyatt-Nichol and Antwi-Boasiako, 2012), trainings can help with group dynamics and collaboration. From our view, Volvo Group IT India does not seem to make the common mistake described by Wyatt-Nichol and Antwi-Boasiako of only raising awareness. Instead, they provide tools for the employees. Pendry, Driscoll and Field (2007) claim that diversity trainings can be helpful when trying to minimize biases, but that it might be difficult since prejudice and bias is usually hard to change. However, the authors claim that it is important that the trainings are followed up to fully succeed. Wyatt-Nichol and Antwi-Boasiako also claim that continuous trainings are of utmost importance.



Volvo Group IT India has two compliance committees. Firstly, an internal compliance committee called ICC that is common for all Volvo Group's units in India, and therefore not specific for IT. According to the HR-manager, such a committee is important and pretty much required in bigger organizations. The second committee is called POSH, which stands for Prevention of Sexual Harassment. The aim of the committee is to deal with any sexual harassment compliances and make sure that they are handled in a fair way. The POSH committee consists of a female head person from Volvo Group IT and an external authority, to get a different point of view and support from the outside. An internal system that prevents and handles potential instances of sexual harassment is of high importance for the organization, as confirmed by Keinert-Kisin (2016). Singh (2016) claims that such an internal system is crucial when trying to minimize sex-based discrimination, especially in India where the gender bias is strong. We want to highlight that the employees also might appreciate being able to talk to a committee with external members instead of their own manager in case of any sexual harassment.

One non-managerial woman described a situation where her male manager had treated her and her female peers differently than their male peers. She raised her concerns to the male manager's superiors, which made them monitor his behavior for six months and eventually dismiss him. She claimed that the openness in the organization was the factor that made her feel comfortable to raise the issue and that she felt confident that her concerns would be heard. As argued by Keinert-Kisin (2016), it is important to have mechanisms like these to successfully enforce the gender equality policies.

*Even smaller things are being heard, by everyone, men and women.*

- Male non-manager

Six of the eight non-managerial respondents thought that they had the opportunity to influence the equality work at Volvo Group. One of the other two, which were both women, stated that they are already doing great and that she does not want to interfere. There are several workshops and a yearly survey where employees get the opportunity to voice their opinions. The survey is then analyzed by an external company. Three of the employees claimed that they had seen that their feedback was taken into consideration and that it made a change in the organization. As an example, they mentioned that the work-life-balance has improved during the last years based on feedback from the survey. The company now facilitates when employees want to change position and also allow more flexibility to work from home. Volvo Group IT has involved the employees and taken their thoughts into consideration, something that both Wyatt-Nichol and Antwi-Boasiako (2012) and Yang and Konrad (2011) suggest is important for a successful policy implementation. These initiatives also indicate that Volvo Group IT India is an inclusive organization, as described by Benchop et al (2015), who state

that inclusive organizations acknowledge the knowledge as well as the different perspectives from their non-managerial staff and use this to shape the core of the organization. However, one respondent claimed that it was hard to influence the equality work, since the organization is large and multinational and that most people in the organization need to agree in order for things to change. We conclude that there seems to be an opportunity for both men and women to influence the equality work at local level, but that there is room for improvement. Participation of both men and women in the equality work is crucial (Grosser & Moon, 2005).

Measures are an important factor in policy implementation, as stated by Wyatt-Nichol and Antwi-Boasiako (2012), not only to measure progress but also to assess the starting situation and to see what problems the organization might face when working with implementation. One measure that is used regarding gender equality at the Bangalore office is the ratio of men and women. However, they do not seem to have any specific goals for the ratio nor any rules for recruiting a specific ratio of men and women. One manager claimed that such rules would go against Volvo Group's policy regarding no discrimination. Although, according to our respondents, managers are encouraged to keep a consciousness regarding the ratio in order not to disfavor any gender. Furthermore, Volvo Group IT's yearly survey where the employees get to voice their opinions and the management team gets an indicator of how the employees feel, is another kind of measure. However, the results of the survey must be measurable in order to set specific targets (Keinert-Kisin, 2016). Some of the respondents reported that there has been an increased focus on gender diversity in the last years. The increased focus might be connected to the Diversity and Inclusion week that started 2014. Moreover, one respondent stated that the ratio of women has gotten higher since he started working at Volvo Group IT in Bangalore.

There were different opinions on how policies were followed up; one manager claimed that it is the HR department who follows up the gender equality, another said it is not followed up regularly and a third stated that they measure and monitor the ratio every month at manager meetings, using charts. It is, according to Woodrow (2014), important to decide who should follow up the policies and evaluate its effectiveness. The different opinions could indicate that there is no clear plan for monitoring the policies. We can, however, not be certain that Volvo Group IT in Bangalore does not have a follow up plan. The respondents' different opinions on how policies are followed up may be due to different perceptions of our interview question rather than a lack of a follow-up strategy. However, there is also a possibility that the reason for the difference in answers was that the policies are not formulated very clearly and without measurable targets, which makes them difficult to follow up.

## 5.2. Recruitment Process at Volvo Group IT India

### 5.2.1. Competency Based Recruitment

One male manager at Volvo Group IT in Bangalore explained that they are constructing competence profiles. According to the manager, it is important to have a good mixture of candidates with different academic backgrounds, work experiences and cultural backgrounds.

As studies in the field show (Lindelöw, 2016; Hallén, 2005), it is important for organizations to create a competence profile where they explicitly state the requirements for the employment. Lindelöw suggests that by making competence the deciding factor in the recruitment decisions, discrimination is counteracted. Furthermore, the literature states that it is crucial that organizations do not have unnecessary requirements that hinder candidates from applying for the employment (Lindelöw, 2016). Taylor and Hood (2010) argue that women tend to undervalue their competences more than men do. We think that it is important for Volvo Group IT in Bangalore to make sure that they do not use a too strict competency profiles, since it could hinder women from applying. However, it has not been concluded from the interviews if Volvo Group IT in Bangalore is working with too strict profiles.

Two of the managerial respondents stated that Volvo Group IT in Bangalore is assisted by a recruitment agency to reach out to suitable candidates. The recruitment agency uses Volvo Group IT in Bangalore's competency profiles to find candidates with the right qualifications. Forde (2001) proposes that with help from a recruitment agency with the initial screening, the recruitment process can become more efficient. The recruitment agencies may also discover qualities among the candidates that the recruiter at the main company would not perceive (Forde, 2001). The literature also points towards potential problems with employing recruitment agencies, for example lack of awareness about what formal and informal skills that are needed (Forde, 2001; Danielsson, 2010). When under-qualified candidates are hired, the recruitment process becomes expensive (Ahrenborg Swensson, 1997).

We think that there might occur difficulties if the recruitment agency's strategies and goals regarding gender equality are not aligned with those of Volvo Group IT in Bangalore. To achieve efficient communication, we argue that it is crucial that the competency profiles of Volvo Group IT in Bangalore are clear so that the recruitment agencies know what type of candidates are wanted.

### 5.2.2. Who Makes the Hiring Decisions?

The second part of the recruitment process at Volvo Group IT in Bangalore is interviews. There are four different interview stages where the candidate has to pass one stage to advance to the next. The

first stage is a telephone interview. The second stage is a technical round, where the formal competence is examined. According to Ellström (1992), formal competence is the foundation and criterion to manage a certain position. Formal competence is easy to measure compared to informal competence, since it can be vouched for by grades and certificates (Antilla, 2011). Formal competence is absolute; either you have it, or you do not (Antilla, 2011).

A manager explained that personality tests and ability tests are used during the technical round for applicants who recently graduated from university. Different types of tests can reduce the risk of discrimination since the candidates are given better chances to show their qualities (Diskrimineringsombudsmannen, 2016). Earlier research in this field (Rashmi, 2010) show that different tests can be used as a complement to the recruitment process since it can ensure that candidates have the requested skills and personal qualities. Lundin and Aarnivaara (2013) state that it is favorable to use more than one test, else there is a risk that the company only chooses candidates based on their ability. Aptitude tests are currently not used at Volvo Group IT in Bangalore for candidates who have relevant work experience. However, we think that it could be beneficial to introduce tests even for candidates with more experience, to avoid bias in the recruitment decision.

From the answers we received, it seems like the technical round is usually held during the weekend. Gupta (2017) mentions that meetings and events in the evening and weekend restrict women from interacting, since Indian women usually have more household chores than Indian men. Having recruitment events during the weekend could have a negative impact on female recruiters as well as for new female candidates applying for open positions. Therefore, we suggest that Volvo Group IT in Bangalore could schedule the technical rounds and other events in daytime during the weekdays.

The third and fourth stage of the recruitment process at Volvo Group IT in Bangalore, also called the HR-round and the manager-round, are focused on informal competences such as attitude, soft skills and problem solving. According to Skorstad (2011), informal competence is difficult to evaluate, since it is about social skills, work approach and personality. There is a risk that the first impression and gut feeling influence the recruiters' perception of the candidate's informal competence (Skorstad, 2011). In correlation with Skorstad, we think that the model that Volvo Group IT in Bangalore uses today, where the informal competence is examined after the formal competence, is advantageous for the company since unconscious bias can be partly counteracted in that way. One non-managerial respondent explained that candidates can get interview questions on how they handle different kinds of scenarios, how they solve conflicts, how they want to develop within the organization and what they think of the future. Lastly, a manager concluded that although formal competence is important, it is equally important that the employees have the right informal competence.

When asked about the shape of the recruitment process, six out of eight non-managerial respondents had identical descriptions, whereas the other two stated that they could not recall. Still, we cannot conclude whether the recruitment processes are consistently equal at Volvo Group IT in Bangalore, since these have not been studied in practice. Lundin and Aarnivaara (2013) state that it is important for companies and organizations to develop clear policies and strategies to achieve a homogenous recruitment process for all candidates, to avoid discrimination.

According to one manager, Volvo Group IT in Bangalore has a policy that at least one female and one male recruiter should be present during the technical round. However, four out of eight non-managerial respondents said that there were more male than female recruiters present during the technical round. Fägerlind (2012) claims that recruitment groups should consist of different genders, sexual orientation and work experiences in order to achieve better assessments. Lundin and Aarnivaara (2013) further explain that a diverse recruitment group increases the chances of a well-functioning recruitment. If the recruitment group consists of a homogenous collection of people, the likelihood of them recruiting a person with similar attributes is high (Lundin & Aarnivaara, 2013). Therefore, we argue that the policy regarding the presence of at least one man and one woman is not comprehensive enough since many of the respondents stated that the majority of the recruiters during the technical rounds were men.

### 5.2.3. Directives Regarding Affirmative Action

Most of the respondents involved in the recruitment process stated that competence is the most important factor, and that the importance of the qualifications will not be lowered to recruit a certain gender. However, three out of six managerial respondents pointed out that when a male and a female candidate are equally competent, the woman might be recruited to increase the ratio of women in the organization. Furthermore, a male manager explained that when he started working at Volvo Group IT in Bangalore the ratio of women was low. He felt that he was encouraged to hire the female applicant if she was equally competent as the male applicants, in order to increase the ratio of women. The same respondent mentioned that now, when the ratio of women is higher, they do not have to take gender into concern in the recruitment process.

*The most important factor is competence, but we can choose to read CV and cover letters from women more carefully than men to achieve the predefined goals that are set.*

- Male Manager

Choosing a woman over a man when the candidates have equal competence is a form of affirmative action (Lundin & Aarnivaara, 2013). The purpose of affirmative action is mainly to achieve a more gender equal workplace and a more even gender distribution according to Kellough (2006).

Applicants recruited through affirmative action have to be as competent as the other candidates by fulfilling all of the required skills (Lundin & Aarnivaara, 2013). A common misconception is that candidates recruited through affirmative action do not have to fulfill the same level of skill (Matheson et al., 2000; Lundin & Aarnivaara, 2013). One male manager argued that women want to be employed based on their competence and not on their gender. The critics of affirmative action also consider it better to employ individuals without regards to gender, which they claim achieves democratic workplaces (Glazer, 1988). Matheson et al. (2000) agree and add that affirmative action may lead to a negative view on the gender that gets prioritized. The authors state that non-prioritized individuals do not have the same opportunity to succeed.

We did not see any comprehensive policy regarding affirmative action at Volvo Group IT in Bangalore, possibly because of the previously mentioned common misconception of affirmative action. Not working with any official policy regarding affirmative action could be problematic for the organization since the recruiters are given freedom to choose if they want to use affirmative action or not. We argue that this freedom could eventually lead to gender differences between departments. This claim is supported by Benchop et al. (2015), who argue that the best results will be reached if all units in the organization enforce policies equally.

Since affirmative action works to decrease discrimination against women in the recruitment processes, it can create similar possibilities for both genders. According to Derks et. al. (2016), women are expected to perform at the same level as, or better than, their male colleagues despite a less powerful starting position. Women get inferior opportunities to perform at their highest level and less resources for their work compared to men (Derks et. al., 2016). Thus, women in working environments dominated by men do not have the same opportunities for development as their male colleagues. Our interpretation is that affirmative action can be a “catch up action” to decrease the actual discrimination of women. Therefore, we argue that affirmative action might be a tool to reduce the risk of gender discrimination and generate more equality between the genders in the recruitment process.

#### 5.2.4. Internal Contra External Recruitment

When we asked respondents in charge of the recruitment process if they prefer internal or external recruitment, five out of seven, both female and male, managers answered that they are primarily looking for internal talents. However, if no appropriate candidate is available internally, the company looks externally. Two managers claimed that they prefer internal recruitment since people in the organization are already aware of the culture, which means that less time is needed to teach principles and policies. One female manager explained that a majority of the positions as IT architects, application developers and testers are recruited externally, while other positions such as managers are mostly recruited internally. She believed that the opportunity for employees to work towards higher positions is important. Bradley (2006) states that the personnel should have incentives to develop and reach higher positions within the company.

*I am first looking internally and then externally. Because I want the employee to be able to develop. In addition, they are already aware of what it means to be employed on Volvo Group IT.*

- Female Manager

A manager explained that one advantage with external recruitment is that external candidates have experience from other organizations. Thus, these individuals can bring in new perspectives. Another manager stated that they prefer a mixture of internal and external applicants. Thoms (2005) emphasizes the importance of equal evaluation for internal and external candidates. The author argues that there might be a tendency for companies and organizations to not conduct the process for internal talents in the same way as for external talents.

Currently, 76 percent of the employees on managerial level at Volvo Group IT in Bangalore are men (Nair et al., 2018). Since there is a tendency that men hire men, it becomes more difficult for women to acquire managing positions (Jämställhetsombudsmannen, 2014). Danielsson (2010) claims that candidates with personalities similar to the interviewer's get more attention during the interviews, which is why it is crucial for recruiters to be neutral and create equal conditions for all applicants. Thus, we think that there might be a risk that the male managers keep employing men and that it could take a long time to reach an equal ratio of men and women. To decrease the risk, we think that it is important to have a clear strategy on how to recruit more women on the managerial level. If Volvo Group IT in Bangalore only focuses on recruiting women at non-managerial level, it will take longer time before the gender distribution at the managerial level becomes more even.

### 5.2.5. Attracting Female Applicants to Volvo Group IT in Bangalore

One of the managers suggested that the ratio of women can be increased through giving employees the possibility to refer to someone they think would fit a position. If the referred person is hired and works at the company for six months or more, the referring person gets a monetary reward, which is larger when the recommended employee is a woman. Additionally, organizations can attract non-traditional applicants by exposing that they value diversity (Goldberg, n.d.). A manager described that Volvo Group IT in Bangalore uses this strategy to attract female applicants. Avery and McKay (2006) state that it is important for companies to not only claim that they work with equality, but also to show that they value it, otherwise the effort might have the opposite effect. As we interpret it, these supportive actions for women could be seen as a form of weak affirmative action, as Åsard and Runblom (2000) and Boonin (2011) describe. According to Boonin, weak affirmative action is intended to make minorities aware of positions that are open and also encourage them to apply, but in the recruitment process the applications are received in a gender-neutral manner. The advantage of the weaker form of affirmative action is that it is not as controversial as the stronger type (Boonin, 2011).

Four respondents claimed that the company primarily uses advertising for the open position and then let people apply. Avery and McKay (2006) state that such an advertising technique can be problematic if it is not clear in the advert that the company sees equal opportunity and inclusiveness as something important. According to Avery and McKay, the lack of clarification on this point could lead to women not applying for the employments. To address this issue, we argue that targeted advertisement might be preferable. Kellough (2006) explains that getting more applicants to the company can be done by aiming adverts towards a special target group. Thoms (2005) further explains that targeted advertisements could make it easier to increase the ratio of female applicants, and eventually average out the imbalance between majority and minority.

## 5.3. Advancing Within Volvo Group IT in Bangalore

### 5.3.1. Perception of an Ideal Leaders' Characteristics

When asked about the idea of an ideal leader or manager and their characteristics, there were several similarities between responses of managers and non-managerial staff. Communication was a common factor brought up by both female and male respondents on both managerial and non-managerial level. Eight respondents talked about the importance of communicating the purpose of the work and tasks that needs to be done. Two male respondents connected this to communicating the vision and objectives of the tasks. Additionally, three female respondents also identified clarity in thoughts, passion or open-minded characteristics in leaders.



Analyzing these answers, we found that there was a difference in the perception of communication. We suggest, from our interviews, that female respondents described the importance of a leader who speaks and communicates with all employees and keeps an open dialogue in the workplace. In contrast, our interpretation was that the male respondents spoke more about communicating the vision or strategy, to clarify the tasks and motivate the subordinates to take action. Gupta (2012) describes the masculine and feminine norms in the workplace, where the feminine traits often are recognized to emotional and submissive characteristics. Our suggestion is that there is a connection between the expectations of a leader and the gender of the respondent, which stands in line with Gupta's statement. In addition, there were three male respondents who used male pronouns when speaking about leaders. Whether the use of male pronouns is a linguistic matter, or an underlying bias of masculine leader characteristics is hard to conclude.

*A leader should guide the group and get the employees to do their tasks. They should not have to come back to him. The leader should point out what can be improved, and always be there both during failures and success.*

- Male Non-managerial respondent

Three male non-managerial respondents and one male managerial respondent described how a leader or manager should advance the team and utilize every employees' skills and traits, one even said that the leader should harvest the best out of everyone. One male manager meant that support is crucial for new ideas to grow. However, one female manager stated that leaders should be able to lift their employees by thinking long term and be aware of how each employee can grow and develop.

Furthermore, three male respondents claimed that a leader should show the direction for the team and guide the group through upcoming tasks by directing and delegating tasks. There were also two female respondents who shared the opinion of how good leaders guide the team, rather than being commanding. Additionally, one male respondent said that "managers should walk the talk" while another stated that "a leader should accept both success and failure, since failure is natural". A male non-managerial respondent said that a leader should have the correct attitude without any biases and "be available". Four female respondents focused on trustworthy and respecting leaders, who value everyone's inputs before taking decisions. A female non-managerial respondent also raised the importance of being a knowledgeable leader. Lastly, both male and female respondents raised the importance of establishing a good and enjoyable work environment.

Interpreting all the factors and characteristics above from their personal perspective, there seems to be a difference in the perception of a leader between the men and women at Volvo Group IT in Bangalore. Our interpretation is that men seemed to be more focused on actions and aiming to reach goals and to continuously develop the team by fully utilizing every resource available. We have interpreted the answers from women as highlighting the importance of feedback, listening and being relationship-oriented and as valuing an open and nurturing leadership with focus on the unity in the team. Gupta (2012) mentions the Indian masculine traits to be recognized as physical strength, dominance, leadership or assertiveness. In contrast, Indian feminine traits are associated with submissive, emotional and nurturing characteristics.

Gokuladas (2010) argues that men mostly prefer so called intrinsic factors, also called career factors, which refer to long-term career objectives and decision influencing. Meanwhile, the author recognizes women to invoke extrinsic factors, like work environment and social relationships, while keeping a good balance between the work and the everyday life. Still, Gokuladas highlights the importance for computer science- and IT-related companies to consider both extrinsic and intrinsic factors to improve the brand and attract more graduates. We hypothesize that Gokuladas' theories on extrinsic and intrinsic factors contra gender permeates the staff at Volvo Group IT in Bangalore. However, we think that there could be a social expectation on women to value "soft skills", and for men to value "hard skills". Gupta (2017) informs that there still exists a social normative structure in India that allocates the family role to women. We therefore suggest that the Indian patrifocal structure creates such expectations, which could be associated to the dual roles women face, where women face family related expectations that men do not face in the same way. Dual roles at Volvo Group IT in Bangalore have been examined by Fransson and Windrup (2013), where they found their female respondents to express gratitude for their dual roles and saw them as beneficial.

### 5.3.2. Widening the Leadership Image

Both men and women identified the desired leader characteristics in themselves, either in their leadership or in their personalities. There was no difference in the question of adjusting one's personality or adapting new characteristics, since both genders thought that there always will be a need for personal development to adjust to new situations. Gokuladas' (2010) study shows no difference between the genders when it comes to prioritizing self-development and career growth, in the form of good training opportunities.

The different approaches towards leadership can be analyzed with the suggestions made by Ayman et al. (2009), namely that some women's leadership skills may in fact be counterproductive when addressing male subordinates. According to Ayman et al. a female leader who shows individualized

consideration is falling in to the schema of female stereotypes, while men can afford to lose some legitimacy as a leader without losing respect. When a woman shows individualized consideration, it is presumed to make her male subordinates perceive her as weak, since men are more prone to see an incongruence between the role of a leader and the role of a woman. Ayman et al. suggest that there might also be an issue with female leaders being perceived as “motherly” when showing individualized consideration, while the corresponding reaction when a male leader shows individualized consideration is appreciation. The conclusions made by Ayman et al. would suggest that male and female subordinates value the same kind of leadership as long as the leader is male.

Ayman et al. (2009) conclude that transformational leadership, although being acknowledged as an effective leadership, may not be efficient for all leaders in all situations. Furthermore, Ayman et al. state that devaluation of female leaders is more likely when the role is masculine-stereotyped. However, there have been ambiguous findings on this field. During our interviews a female manager stated that “leaders should always think long term and how they want their employees to grow”. Another female manager said that the team needs to be involved in the decision making. A male manager stated that leaders should give flexibility and support, while another male non-managerial respondent suggested that a “full perspective”, understanding the objective and learning how to motivate their employees was of importance. Soyeon and Mannsoo (2017) refer to a study that suggests that female transformational leadership is as effective as male transformational leadership. We therefore suggest that the mentioned answers are expressions of a transformational leadership.

Ayman et al. (2009) suggest that the incongruence of the two roles of being a woman and being a leader counts for some of the biases towards women. The authors claim that men can “afford” to be softer and still not lose their presumed leader capability, since the schemas of their male role and their leader role are not in contrast. We think that transformational leadership is valued by both men and women at Volvo Group IT in Bangalore. However, Ayman et al. suggest that although men may think that they value transformational leadership as much as women, there might be a difference in how they value it when it is carried out by a woman. This analysis would imply that men have one way they think they want their leaders to behave, but that there could still be room for unconscious biases. Our purpose is not to question the male respondents’ responses, but rather to raise the question *if* this could be a possible scenario.

### 5.3.3. Unconscious Gender Based Bias in the Workplace

Three male and one female respondents said that they were unbiased, possibly referring to Volvo Group IT as a company. We suggest that it is very difficult, if not completely impossible, to be sure that one is unbiased. Keinert-Kisin (2016) claims that most of the modern gender discrimination is

based on unconscious associations between individuals and their gender. One primary action to minimize gender bias is, according to Keinert-Kisin, to raise awareness to it. Wyatt-Nichol and Antwi-Boasiako (2012) argue that diversity training, including raising awareness, should not be a one-time event. We therefore think that a successful diversity training should go on continuously, striving for an unbiased organization.

According to Keinert-Kisin (2016) gender bias is present among both men and women of all ages. Ayman et al. (2009) also substantiate the existing biases with evidence that female and male leaders are judged differently. Ayman et al. state that devaluation of female leaders is more likely when the role is masculine-stereotyped. We think that the masculinity schema could be questioned in this case, since Varma and Kapur (2015) state that computer science and IT-related jobs in general are seen as women-friendly in India, both by men and women. However, Varma and Kapur do not connect their findings to leadership, and therefore we find it hard to fully dissociate with certainty. Yet, Fransson and Windrup (2013) suggest in their bachelor thesis that women in Volvo Group IT in Bangalore feel that they have to perform better than men to stand out and be visible.

Madsen and Scribner (2017) claim that unconscious gender biases in organizations are mostly not acknowledged, and especially so in cross-cultural and international management studies. Lituchy et al. suggested in 1996 that female managers and management students no longer made gender typecasts regarding managerial positions, and that women were viewed as likely as men to possess required characteristics to pursue a successful managerial job. But, the authors underlined that these changes were not seen in the male perception of leadership, which was still more men-like than women-like. Based on the biases of the male students Lituchy et al. claim that leadership progress favorable for male managers. The authors also state that the prejudice of manager characteristics was a global phenomenon.

Gupta (2012) as well as Varma and Kapur (2015) state that India is a patrifocal country. The patrifocality suggests that the male patriarch could be a center figure and that the bias connected to leadership could be at least as strong in India as in other, less patrifocal, countries. Soyeon and Mannsoo (2017) claim that Asian cultures are more male dominated than western cultures, which we think implies that gender biases are probably intrinsic in the Indian culture, such as in most cultures. With that said, Volvo Group IT is facing macro-cultural structures when addressing gender inequality, which does make it harder, but probably not impossible, to increase female participation in the company.

The fact that the respondents were very prone to say that they are unbiased implies, in our opinion, that they are aware of the importance of not being biased and wish to have an equal workplace. We also suggest that the gender equality situation at Volvo Group IT at this moment is more of an initiative taken by high managers, rather than an outspoken plan, further suggesting that the corporate leaders and informal leaders have driven these questions idealistically. Lituchy et al. (1996) claim that male decision makers, due to their bias, are more prone to promote men. At the same time, Keinert-Kisin (2016) suggest that women in managerial positions tend to have the same gender biases as their male colleagues. Thus, Keinert-Kisin argues that it is not enough to merely position more women higher up in the organizational hierarchy in order to minimize gender bias and change the organization. Nevertheless, we suggest that it is a fine line to balance, since managerial staff may quit, and without a formulated implementation plan to approach gender representation issues the focus on such questions could disappear with the staff leaving the company, irrelevant of the gender of the managers.

#### 5.3.4. Personal Development and the Comprehension of Mentoring

When it comes to competence development for individuals and their personal development, two female manager respondents described that their tasks as managers is to work closely with this matter. Nearly half of the participating non-managerial staff did not seem to be familiar with a personal development plan including competence development. However, all 16 of the respondents agreed that Volvo Group IT in Bangalore is providing opportunities to grow and develop. One of the non-managerial male respondents explained that Volvo Group IT in Bangalore puts much effort in personal development with training opportunities and seminars to prepare the employees for the next role. Nevertheless, Volvo Group's Sustainability Report from 2017 states that each employee should have a personal plan of development. The plans include a strategy for competence development while translating the strategic objectives of the organization into individual objectives (AB Volvo, 2018a).

Furthermore, two of the female non-managerial respondents added that there are several activities and projects for individuals interested in personal development. One of these respondents was also aware of Volvo Group IT in Bangalore wanting their workforce to have diverse knowledge of relevance for the organization. The second respondent had joined Volvo Group IT in Bangalore after her studies through a trainee program and was satisfied with her development plan and path. In addition, she stated that everyone is free to apply for any role, and that there is nothing hindering her from advancing in the company.

It was highlighted by respondents at all corporate levels and of both genders that the Volvo Group corporate culture is known for equality, opportunities to career growth, good work-life-balance and being a quality brand. This view would maybe suggest that those who have sought for a job at Volvo

Group IT would want to identify with these traits, and this was also what we heard in the interviews. Nine of the respondents stated that the brand was of importance when they sought for a job at Volvo Group IT. Six respondents highlighted a good work-life-balance as important when before applying to Volvo Group IT, while five respondents thought that the career growth offered at Volvo Group IT was of great importance when searching for a new job at Volvo Group IT. We could not see any differences in the way men and women answered this question, as brand, work-life-balance and career growth was of high importance for both men and women.

According to a male managerial respondent, Volvo Group IT in Bangalore has several mentorship programs available in the organization. When we asked both managerial and non-managerial respondents if they had had a mentor, two out of seven women answered yes, while three out of five male respondents answered yes. Regarding mentoring, Anand (2014) recognizes how recruited women also add value as mentors within the organization for future female employees. The author further points at the advantages of mentoring and informal network, which increases the employees' social capital and plays an important role to future goals. Bukhari and Sharma (2014) refer to a study based on participation in mentoring programs, which shows that women are disfavored when it comes to promotions even when they are given the same mentoring opportunities. In particular, the study shows that when men and women are equally mentored, male adepts get a better outcome from their mentorship. However, the authors have not clarified the reason for this correlation. We therefore suggest that the mentoring programs instead could be adjusted to better fit female applicants, since Bukhari and Sharma's statement does not speak in favor of women. Although, no conclusions can be drawn regarding the situation at the mentoring programs available at Volvo Group IT in Bangalore. Still, it could be an idea to evaluate the outcomes of mentoring programs.

### 5.3.5. Opportunities for Networking and Socializing

During the interviews both men and women at all levels agreed on the importance of networking and socializing. A strong and wide network was said to be an important factor in both self-development and career growth. It would also lead to individuals expressing themselves easier, according to one female respondent. Gupta (2017) agrees on the importance of networking, especially to acquire influence and support, but also states that the absence of networking can hinder women from advancing. We therefore consider networking a fundamental part in career advancement. Anand (2014) identifies some key strengths of women as managers in India, where the factors of being more understanding and compassionate, establishing trust and respect and networking better are mentioned. Once again, we would like to suggest that attributing certain qualities to different genders could strengthen bias against women, possibly creating expectations on women that are different from the expectations on their male counterpart.

Gupta (2017) mentions that gendered practices in organizations restrict women from interaction and networking. The author mentions late held meetings or plant visits which women are not able to attend as an example. Consequently, the author elaborates that women miss out on the chance to be seen or get their voice heard, while lacking the opportunity to network and interact with coworkers. However, Anand's (2014) statement that women are better at networking cannot be concluded from our interviews. Anand moreover informs that the networking factor is a meaningful factor acquired through mentoring, which we found confirmed in the interview where one female manager supported this to be available through mentoring programs.

However, when it comes to differences in opportunities between men and women to network and socialize at Volvo Group IT in Bangalore there were split opinions. There was a female manager who said that "it seems a little intimidating for women to network in India, compared to men". Additionally, two of the male non-managerial respondents stated that "women are more reserved in India" and that "the fundamentals have not been favorable for women from the beginning", which both respondents said has led to unequal opportunities to socialize in the Indian society. Although, both male respondents point out that this is a changing matter.

*Women do not have as big opportunity to network. Women are more reserved in India. This is changing, but still a problem.*

- Male non-managerial respondent

The disadvantages that women face while networking may be due to the patrifocal structure in India identified by Gupta (2012) and Varma and Kapur (2015). Nielsen and Waldrop (2014) describe how Indian middle-class women are expected to live up to classic female roles in addition to pursuing higher educations. Nielsen and Waldrop further suggest that these women are challenging the traditional female role in society by simply pursuing an education and taking part of the public sphere. If this is the case, we presume that old structures are still forming the different expectations on women and men, perhaps meaning that women still need some extra backing to network to the same extent as men. On the other hand, it is our perception that India is a diverse country, perhaps making it hard to draw such conclusions.

A male managerial respondent talked about how everyone is equally invited to socialize and to attend events, while women are also being encouraged to do so. Two non-managerial male respondents agreed on mostly seeing female coworkers at the events organized by the organization like singing, dancing or other sports activities. However, their female coworkers were noticed to pass some of these events which could be due to lack of time. One male respondent added that it might be

problematic for female coworkers to attend late held meetings. Whereas Gupta (2017) mentions how organizational practices can restrict women from interaction or networking, this does not seem to be the situation at Volvo Group IT in Bangalore. Still, Gupta confirms that if meetings or activities are held in evenings or in weekends, it can be difficult for women to attend due to family expectations. This issue should be considered when scheduling any kind of event.

Two non-managerial female respondents stated that networking and socializing are connected to individual interests and aspects rather than gender. Further, they highlighted the importance of taking initiative and being motivated to network and socialize, since no one will be able to tell them how it should be done. One of the female respondents have also been engaged in organizing several activities, like weekend trips, and was very positive about the outcome. Naturally, in this thesis it is hard to reason whether activity participation and network inclination is of an individual matter or if it has a correlation to gender.

### 5.3.6. Managing Marriage, Parenthood and Maternity Leave

Five respondents, both men and women at managerial and non-managerial level, agreed on the importance of a good work-life-balance. Many described that keeping a balance is a difficult task, since family often is prioritized. One male non-managerial respondent suggested that Volvo Group IT in Bangalore could provide better opportunities for work-life-balance, but on the other hand one female respondent suggested that Volvo Group IT in Bangalore gives good support to balance work and life. Two female respondents, one managerial and one non-managerial, addressed how the work is flexible, which they think is advantageous when getting married or having children. Additionally, one male managerial respondent and one non-managerial respondent said that they appreciated the opportunity to work from home five days a month at Volvo Group IT in Bangalore. However, Fransson and Windrup (2013) found in their thesis that women are exposed to higher work-family interface than men at Volvo Group IT in Bangalore. Further, in 2013 the authors concluded that women within the organization requested a more satisfying work-life-balance.

The paid maternity leave at Volvo Group IT in Bangalore is currently six months, according to the respondents, with a possible twelve months extension. Previously, the maternity leave was only three months. During the interviews, the increase in maternity leave was described by men and women at all corporate levels to be newly changed and was both appreciated and positively emphasized. One woman claimed that it is more common for women having to return to a different position after maternity leave now when the maternity leave is six months, compared to earlier when the maternity leave was shorter. On the other hand, one manager claimed that more women are returning to work after maternity since the longer maternity leave policy was introduced.



Three women and one man highlighted the importance of a plan for the maternity leave but more importantly the return. It was specified how helpful a specific plan for the return after maternity leave would be, and one female respondent said that she felt the need of structure when returning to work, since it was difficult to focus “when the mind was somewhere else”, as she described it. A female manager said that she feels that many women are struggling with returning to work after maternity leave. The female manager added that she thinks that women can help each other in the Volvo Group IT Bangalore female network initiative VWings when it comes to these matters. VWings is further explained and analyzed in section 5.3.7.

One female manager claimed that another issue is that many women quit their jobs when they get married since they often have to move to live with their husband. Furthermore, she claimed that only a few female employees are returning to work after having children, something which two other female managers, two male managers, one female and one male non-managerial agreed on. One woman in a non-managerial position claimed that one reason why women might not return to work after maternity might be that they cannot always return to the same position. Thus, if women choose to return to work after maternity leave they may have to face not only the added responsibilities at home, but also the pressure from learning and adapting to a new role at work.

Two respondents claimed that women do not change jobs as often as men, since men tend to get more restless than women, which is supported by Anand (2014) who proposes that female coworkers are more loyal to their organization. Gupta (2017) claims that this loyalty can be connected to women being more vulnerable to geographical distance due to their family role. The sensitivity to geographical relocation is also in line with the responses collected from the interviews, where one male respondent highlighted how female coworkers are more dependent on the traffic on their way back and forth to their workplace due to safety reasons. He explicitly said that these obstacles are time consuming for many women - time which they could otherwise have spent to do something more prioritized. A female manager explained how her spouse is not keen on her travelling.

*At leadership levels there are not as many women - there could be different reasons for that. It is known that the more you advance the more responsibility you get. You might be expected to travel more, which many women cannot do.*

– Female manager

Female respondents also described the appreciation of returning to the same position and similar tasks after maternity leave, since a change would lead to higher stress when returning after maternity leave.

*I was given very good support during my return from maternity leave, both from the company but also coworkers and my manager.*

- Female manager

It seems to us that the organizational support given to Indian women is crucial if they are to continue their careers after getting married and having kids. One male manager highlighted the need to support women when they are returning to work after maternity leave. His examples of how it could be done was to advise and support them by offering more flexibility to work from home and helping with how to prioritize tasks at work.

According to McKinsey & Company (2016), Indian women in average do ten times as much unpaid care work as Indian men, and the global corresponding number is three. The unpaid workload naturally increases when creating a family of one's own, which makes this a time when women are extra vulnerable to heavy work-related pressure, further suggesting that structure and well-known work tasks are good during such a period. On the other hand, Gupta (2017) argues that even though the IT-sector and the field of computer science have been in the frontline when it comes to gender equality in India, women tend to be more demoted to routinized tasks than men. Obviously, we do not think that giving women routinized tasks is the way to increase higher female participation in the sector, and consequently one must balance structure and well-known tasks with not demoting female workforce when women are returning from maternity leave. Above all, we suggest that this matter should perhaps be considered individually, in consultation with the manager in the specific case. One female respondent said that she was unsure if her current position would remain if she left for maternity leave, suggesting that there is still some uncertainty for women when going on maternity leave. However, the number of mothers returning to work was experienced as being higher at Volvo Group IT than in many other Indian companies, possibly because of the company culture at Volvo Group.

### 5.3.7. The Female Initiative Network VWings

In 2017, a female initiative called VWings was started by a female employee at Volvo Group IT in India. The purpose with VWings is to support women in their work-life and help them get back to work after maternity leave, since most women stop working after giving birth or getting married. Previously there was no open forum for women to discuss their issues, and the goal with VWings is to make the discussions informal to encourage employees to share experiences. VWings organizes

motivational and leadership talks, health check-ups, self-defense programs and nutritional advice. They also have a buddy system, which works like a mentorship program. Most of the employees interviewed were familiar with the program. However, it is our impression that not all of our female respondents were aware of what VWings actually offer, and that the network could further be promoted. A female respondent claimed that the program could be improved by reaching out to more women.

We think that a female network could work as a network where women can help each other and where their experiences are the focal of the discussions. However, we suggest that this network could be a forum to increase women's opportunities of networking and socializing. Since the events in VWings are suggested together with women we think the events will be attracting for women in the network. Additionally, we think that VWings can work as a way of introducing women to policy making, and thus give rise to higher involvement in the policy implementation. We think that it could further internalize the gender policy implementation to the organizational goals.

### 5.3.8. Further Improvements

All respondents seemed happy with Volvo Group IT India's commitment to gender equality and expressed the view that Volvo Group IT has managed to create a gender equal workplace and should continue working in the same way. When we asked about what Volvo Group IT could do further in order to help women in their everyday life several respondents, both men and women at first claimed that they saw no need for improvement regarding the gender equality, but when asking further they still saw potential improvements. One suggested improvement was the possibility for employees, especially women, to work even more than the five days per month from home. However, we cannot conclude to what extent this is possible at Volvo Group IT in Bangalore.

*They are doing kind of everything from what I have seen.*

- Female manager

However, one male respondent failed to see potential improvements with Volvo Group IT India's gender equality work. We think this could perhaps be a sign that he did not fully see the implications of working with gender equality, that he had problems to fully understand the issues women face or that he simply had not reflected much on the issue. If his lack of understanding can be applied to others within the company, this can according to Fägerlind (2012) be problematic since everyone in the organization should understand the effects of gender equality. However, since all but one respondent seemed to be able to envision potential improvements regarding what Volvo Group IT

does for women in everyday life, we think that his answer cannot be applied to the organization in general.

One female respondent mentioned that it is important to focus on gender equality to uplift women, since Indian women do not get as many possibilities as men in general. The sense of lack of possibilities might be connected to that the gender bias in India, as stated by Singh (2016), is strong. Hence, our analysis is that even though most employees seemed to think of the gender equality at Volvo Group IT in Bangalore as satisfactory there could still be some cases of gender bias. However, it is unclear if it is possible for Volvo Group IT as a company to influence more than what is already done, or if it is more of a cultural issue.

## 6. Conclusions

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*In this chapter, we will discuss our answers to the research questions. This thesis has sought to review gender equality in the multinational IT sector by studying Volvo Group IT's office in Bangalore, India. The research was carried out by investigating the implementation of gender equality policies at the Volvo Group IT department, how gender equality is addressed in the recruitment process and women's opportunity to advance in their careers.*

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### 6.1. Flexible Policies and Implementation Processes

All respondents seemed pleased with Volvo Group IT India's commitment to gender equality and expressed the view that Volvo Group IT has managed to create a gender equal workplace and should continue working in the same way. However, policy implementation and gender equality work is a continuous process with constant room for improvement.

According to our findings, Volvo Group IT in Bangalore are flexible in their gender equality policy making. Guidelines are provided from the Swedish headquarters, although without outspoken goals or strategies on implementation. Such flexibility enables the local leaders to adapt policies to local circumstances, which according to literature is proven to be necessary for large multinational companies such as Volvo Group and also places great responsibility on these leaders.

To minimize the issues that could arise if influential and committed leaders would leave, we argue that Volvo Group could benefit from producing explicit guidelines - regarding gender equality policies as well as implementation process. With that said, there is a tradeoff between minimizing the issues that could arise if influential and committed leaders would leave and enabling flexibility to local circumstances. From our view, flexibility is important, and if Volvo Group encourages local leaders to more explicitly formulate their local adaption, the policies can be implemented and followed up more efficiently, without loss of flexibility.

### 6.2. Ensuring an Unbiased Recruitment Process

We can conclude from the analysis that Volvo Group IT India are aware of the importance of gender equality in the recruitment process. However, we still believe that there might be room for improvement regarding the strategies to handle the challenges of unintentional gender bias in the recruitment process.

As mentioned in the analysis, there were different opinions on how Volvo Group IT in Bangalore uses affirmative action, where some recruiters choose to use affirmative action in the cases when an increase in the ratio of women is preferred. In conclusion, we argue that there might be a risk that the lack of clear directives could lead to different strategies and gender differences between departments.

Furthermore, we found during our interviews that internal recruitment is primarily preferred over external recruitment in the organization. Whether internal recruitment leads to a disadvantage for women within Volvo Group IT in Bangalore today is difficult to conclude. Irrespective of this, we think that it is important to have a clear strategy on how to recruit more women on managerial level, and not only focus on recruiting women on non-managerial level. Such strategy might be more efficient to reach higher equality on all levels within the company. Lastly, the emphasis on diversified recruitment groups was found to be low during the technical round, which leads us to the conclusion that the organization might underestimate gender bias when recruiting. Hence we suggest implementing stricter policies regarding diversified recruitment groups primarily during the technical round, but also the later interview rounds.

### 6.3. Advancing in Volvo Group IT in Bangalore

We can conclude that the female respondents seem to be more prone to value extrinsic leadership factors when asked about preferred leadership qualities, while male respondents seem to be more prone to value intrinsic leadership factors. Therefore, it is of high importance to balance both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. However, we think that there could be different social expectations on women and men about what leadership styles they should prefer. Therefore, we are hesitant to say that men and women value different leadership styles, since we do not want to reinforce gender-based biases.

Our respondents said in the interviews that they were unbiased, which we conclude from a wide range of literature is hard to state with certainty. Still, we reason that the consciousness of the existence of biases explicitly prove the importance of continuous diversity training since it is unlikely that many employees use the same term unless it has been discussed in the organization. We found during our literature studies that underestimation of women works as a threat to the advancement of women, and that written assessments can counteract such biases. Therefore, tools such as 360-degree feedback can be useful to estimate the perception of one's leadership style. Furthermore, we suggest that different measurements and follow-up-strategies could be used to map the outcome of mentorship programs with respect to the gender variable and thus ensure equal outcome of mentoring for men and women. Additionally, we suggest that VWings can introduce women to the policy making and thus give rise to

higher involvement in the process of policy making and that this could further internalize the gender policy implementation to the organizational goals.

We understand that due to the changing environment Volvo Group IT operates in, it can be difficult to ensure that women return to the exact same tasks and position after maternity leave. Still, being able to return to the same tasks and the same position after maternity leave was highlighted as important during our interviews. Lastly, the Indian issue of women not returning after maternity leave is one of a macro-cultural dimension, but we believe that gender policies and gender inequalities are receiving more attention globally and that the conditions for working women are changing. We think that Indian women in the IT-industry will gain more influence and play an influential role in the future.

## 7. Future Research

From our point of view, it would be interesting to apply our methodology in other departments in the organization. Is Volvo Group working in the same way with gender equality in other countries? How is the gender policy applied in other parts of the world? Thus, we think it would be interesting to investigate other departments within Volvo Group. Such research could lead to a wider understanding of the strategic gender policies within the organization. Further research on the topic of gender policy implementation could work as a mapping of successful strategies, and in that way clarify which efforts that are most efficient. Our literature study suggests that there are not sufficiently many studies on this topic.

Different companies will most likely have different problems and different strategies to handle the questions we have studied. Therefore, it could be clarified what sectors within STEM that are successful and which companies whose commitment towards equality can be improved.

Furthermore, we think it could be interesting to conduct a similar study at Volvo Group IT in Bangalore, but target a more specific audience. Hence one could draw more general conclusions, for example how different generations relate to these kinds of questions. Moreover, it would be interesting to conduct an investigation focusing on the economic principles at Volvo Group IT in Bangalore, for example if there is a salary gap between the genders.



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# Appendix 1

## Interview Template for Non-Managerial Staff

(IT Architects, Application Developers, Testers)

### **General work situation:**

- What is your current position in Volvo Group IT?
  - What are your main tasks?
- For how long have you been working at Volvo Group IT?
  - Any previous positions at the company?
- What prompted you to join Volvo Group IT?
  - *Would you like to specify?*
- Is there a plan for personal development for competence development integrated in your position?
  - If yes, what does it include?

### **Personal background:**

- What is your educational background?
- What made you interested in pursuing a career/education in technology?
  - Did you have any role model or someone who led you to this area?

### **Regarding Volvo Group IT's policy work:**

- How would you define gender equality in an organization?
- Are you familiar with Volvo Group's gender equality policy?
- Why do you think Volvo Group IT wants to focus on gender equality?
- Do you think (feel) you have the opportunity to influence the equality work?
  - *If so, how?*

Are you familiar with vwings?

### **Career Advancement:**

- What characteristics do you find are typical for leaders and managers? (Should be typical or are typical?)
- Which of these characteristics do you possess?

- Do you feel that you would have to adjust your personality to take on a heavier leadership role?
  - Would men/women equally adjust?
  - *If so, how?*
- Are you part of any mentoring program (at or outside of work)?
  - Is this something you feel would benefit your career advancement?
- Do you feel working at Volvo Group IT has facilitated your career growth?
  - *If so, how?*
- Is there something Volvo Group IT could do to help you while pursuing your career?
- Networking/socializing men and women?

**Regarding the recruitment:**

- How was the interview process carried out?
  - What kind of questions did they ask?
  - Who was present during your recruitment interviews?
  - Is there something else you think we should know about the recruitment process?
  - Did you do some sort of aptitude tests or similar?

**Parenthood and marriage:**

- Are you married?
  - If so, have your working hours or tasks changed due to this?
- Do you have any children?
  - If so, how old are they?
    - Were you home on parental leave? For how long? Did the company support this in any way?
    - Did Volvo Group IT do anything to facilitate your return to work?
  - If not, do you fear that this would interfere with your career plans?
    - *Would you give up your career if you got married or had children?*

Could Volvo do anything to help women in everyday life?

# Appendix 2

## Interview Templates for Group Managers

### **General work situation:**

- What is your current position in Volvo Group IT?
  - What are your main tasks?
- For how long have you been working at Volvo Group IT?
  - Any previous positions at the company?
- What prompted you to join Volvo Group IT?
  - *Would you like to specify?*

### **Personal background:**

- What is your educational background?
- What made you interested in pursuing a career/education in technology?
  - Did you have any role model or someone who led you to this area?

### **Female initiative:**

- Could you tell us a bit about the female initiative?
  - How many people are involved in the initiative?
  - What does the initiative entail?
  - What year did the program start?
  - How did it develop?
  - How do you think you've made the most difference?

### **Regarding Volvo Group IT's policy work:**

- How would you define gender equality in an organization?
- What would you say is the core of Volvo Group's gender equality policy?
- How do you work to implement Volvo Group's gender equality policy?
  - To what extent do you have the opportunity to influence gender equality work?
- Have you been provided the resources and tools to pursue a diverse and inclusive workplace?  
(E.g. education...)
  - *If so, what kind?*
- Do you have any measures to follow up your equality work?
  - Do your managers follow up your equality work?
- Why do you think Volvo Group IT wants to focus on gender equality?

- Do you feel working at Volvo Group IT has facilitated your career growth?
  - *If so, how?*
- Is there something Volvo Group IT could do to help you while pursuing your career?

**Career Advancement:**

- What characteristics do you find most valuable for leaders and managers?
- Which of your personal characteristics do you think has helped you the most in your managerial position?
- Do you feel that you had to adjust your personality to reach your professional position?
  - *If so, how?*
- Have you had any mentor during your career advancement?
  - Do you feel that this was helpful?

**Regarding the recruitment:**

- Are you part of the recruitment process?
  - Does everyone involved in recruiting have equal impact on the decision?
  - If you make your decisions mostly based on competence: how do you ensure that?
    - Do you in any way make sure that your subordinates follow this?
  - Do you prefer internal or external recruitment? In what situations and positions?

**Parenthood and marriage:**

- Are you married?
  - If so, have your working hours or tasks changed due to this?
- Do you have any children?
  - If so, how old are they?
    - Were you home on parental leave? For how long? Did the company support this in any way?
    - Did Volvo Group IT do anything to facilitate your return to work?
  - If not, do you fear that this would interfere with your career plans?
- *Would you give up your career if you got married or had children?*

# Appendix 3

## Interview Template for Department Managers

### **General work situation:**

- What is your current position in Volvo Group IT?
  - What are your main tasks?
- For how long have you been working at Volvo Group IT?
  - Any previous positions at the company?
- What prompted you to join Volvo Group IT?
  - *Would you like to specify?*

### **Personal background:**

- What is your educational background?
- What made you interested in pursuing a career/education in technology?
  - Did you have any role model or someone who led you to this area?

### **Regarding Volvo Group IT's policy work:**

- How would you define gender equality in an organization?
- What would you say is the core of Volvo Group's gender equality policy?
- How do you work to implement Volvo Group's gender equality policy?
  - To what extent do you have the opportunity to influence gender equality work?
- Have you been provided the resources and tools to pursue a diverse and inclusive workplace?  
(E.g. education, outreach programs...)
  - *If so, what kind?*
- Do you have any measures to follow up your equality work?
  - Do you have any measures to follow up your subordinates' equality work?
  - Do your managers follow up your equality work?
- Why do you think Volvo Group IT wants to focus on gender equality?
- Do you feel working at Volvo Group IT has facilitated your career growth?
  - *If so, how?*
- Is there something Volvo Group IT could do to help you while pursuing your career?
- If I were you, I would like to know if the person worked at Volvo Group before the policy was implemented and if so, what has been the most visible outcome of the policy. Working procedures, recruitment process, social benefits?

**Regarding the recruitment:**

- Are you part of the recruitment process?
  - Does everyone involved in recruiting committee have equal impact on the decision?
  - If you make your decisions mostly based on competence: how do you ensure that?
    - Do you in any way make sure that your subordinates follow this?
  - Do you prefer internal or external recruitment? In what situations and positions?

**Career Advancement:**

- What characteristics do you find most valuable for leaders and managers?
- Which of your personal characteristics do you think have helped you the most in your managerial position?
- Do you feel that you had to adjust your personality to reach your professional position?
  - *If so, how?*
- Have you had any mentor during your career advancement?
  - Do you feel that this was helpful?

**Parenthood and marriage:**

- Are you married?
  - If so, have your working hours or tasks changed due to this?
- Do you have any children?
  - If so, how old are they?
    - Were you home on parental leave? For how long? Did the company support this in any way?
    - Did Volvo Group IT do anything to facilitate your return to work?
  - If not, do you fear that this would interfere with your career plans?
- *Would you give up your career if you got married or had children?*

# Appendix 4

## Interview Template for the HR-manager

### **General work situation:**

- What is your present occupation and place of employment?
- How long have you had this position? Number of years in the organization?
  - Previous positions at Volvo?
- What is your educational background?
- What motivated you to start working at Volvo IT India?

### **Recruitment:**

- How is the recruitment carried out? Who is present? (managers, recruitment groups etc.)
  - Does everyone have equal impact on the decision?
- What aspects are the most relevant when you choose which applicants are invited to interviews?
- What is the ratio between women and men among the applicants?
  - Do you work in any strategic way to attract more female applicants?
- How do you ensure that the applicants have the relevant educational background?
- If you make your decisions mostly based on competence: how do you ensure that?
- What if a male and a female applicant have equal qualification?
  - How is this handled?
- Do you prefer internal or external recruitment?
  - In what situations and positions?
- Do you use different kinds of tests?
  - Personal, leadership or competence tests e.g.?

### **Gender equality initiatives:**

- How would you define gender equality within an organization?
- Why is it important for Volvo Group IT to focus on gender equality?
- What concrete action plans do you have to reach gender equality within Volvo Group IT?
- Do you have any competence- or mentoring programs at Volvo Group IT?
  - How are you involved these?
- Would you like to tell us a bit about the female network initiative?
- Do you have any strategy to avoid sexual harassments and similar discrimination in Volvo Group IT?

- If so, how?
- What routine do you have in cases where employees are harassed?
- How many times have employees reported harassment or discrimination?

**How to broaden the subconscious view of leadership characteristics**

- What characteristics does Volvo Group IT value for leader or management roles?
- Does Volvo Group IT India work in a strategic way to broaden the picture on leadership characteristics? If so, how?

What could Volvo Group IT do to help women employees further in the everyday life?



# Appendix 5

## Interview Template for the Unit Director

### General work situation:

- For how long have you had your current position at Volvo?
- For how long have you been working at Volvo Group IT?
  - Any previous positions at the company?
- What prompted you to join Volvo Group IT?

### Implementing gender policies:

- What do you think are the greatest challenges regarding reaching gender equality at Volvo Group IT in India?
  - How do you work to overcome these challenges?
- How decentralized is the **policy making** procedure? I.e. how much do you in India get to decide on your policies?
- How decentralized is the policy **implementation**, i.e. how strict guidelines do you follow?
- How much of top-down kind of follow up **measurements** do you get from the headquarter in Sweden regarding gender equality?
  - Do you follow up *Balanced Team Indicator* or *Inclusiveness Index*?
- How do you integrate gender policy work with your organizational goals and objectives?
- How educated are your personnel in questions regarding gender policy implementation?
  - Are your employees given any concrete guidelines regarding how to create a more inclusive work environment?
  - If so, in what way?
- How do you follow up on your sub managers equality work?
  - If they do not have a good result regarding gender balance, are there any follow-ups regarding this?
  - If so, how do you follow up this work?

### Regarding Volvo Group IT's policy work:

- How would you define gender equality in an organization?
- What would you say is the core of Volvo Group's gender equality policy?
- How do you work to implement Volvo Group's gender equality policy?
  - To what extent do you have the opportunity to influence gender equality work?

- Have you been provided the resources and tools to pursue a diverse and inclusive workplace?  
(E.g. education...)
- Have you proceeded any education regarding equality or diversity management?
- *If so, what kind?*
- Why do you think it's important for Volvo Group IT to focus on gender equality?
- How do you feel that Volvo Group IT compares with other Indian companies regarding gender equality?
- Do you remember what the gender equality was like when you started at Volvo?
  - Any improvements?

### **Recruitment**

- To what extent are you part of the recruitment process?
- How do you work to reach out to potential external candidates?
- If you make your decisions mostly based on competence: how do you ensure that?
- If you have two equally qualified candidates, do you prefer the woman over the man?
  - Are the policies explicitly focused on getting as many women as possible?
- Do you prefer internal or external recruitment?
  - In what situations and positions?