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Deltaker

Navn: Juni Ellertsen

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OPT-OUT CHOICES IN BUSINESS: HOW DOES IT FRAME GENDER DIFFERENCES?

*A STUDY ON OPT-OUT CHOICES AND HOW IT IS
FRAMING GENDER DIFFERENCES IN THE DECISION TO
COMPETE FOR PROMOTIONS.*

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A study on opt-out choices and how it is framing gender differences in the decision to compete for promotions.

Supervisor: Mads Nordmo Arnestad

Abstract

This master thesis aims to investigate how an opt-out choice may frame genders. By making a vignette with four scenarios I will research how the society, more specifically, how the respondents view men and women when they are put in different scenarios where they must compete against the opposite gender.

At the end of this paper, I aim to make the readers get an insight and understanding of how the society view the different genders when it comes to opt-in and opt-out choices in work related competition.

Expected findings are that women who chooses to compete for a promotion, even though a colleague and friend seems to want the position very much, will be viewed in a negative way by the observants. This is because I believe that women are viewed as people who should not compete actively against a friend. However, I expect to find that men who actively competes against a woman might be viewed a less mean person because society expect men to compete as it is proven that men are more competitive in their nature.

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01. Introduction

1.1 Background

Women are underrepresented in most top leadership positions (Burke & Major, 2014). For example, estimates indicate that women represent less than 23% of executive officers, less than 30% of senior management, and less than 37% of managers (McKinsey, 2022). It looks like the entry level in the organization does not suffer from the same gender imbalance that the top positions suffer from. Women also hold less than 10,4% of Fortune 500 CEOs (Hinchliffe, 2023). Despite these facts, women are increasingly outperforming men at university. Further, women represent around 63% of the undergraduate, and 58% of the master's degrees awarded in Norway (Nygård, 2018). As an example, for the difference between education and work position, women represent 56,5% of medical students, but they hold 37% of doctor positions (AAMC, 2022). They also represent around 56% of law students, but women only represent 40% of working lawyers in the U.S (Ariella, 2023).

More recent research show that women are holding 42% of managers position, and that this number has increased by less than 2 percentage points between 2018 to 2021. Further it says that women in the US make up 48% of the workforce in 2021 (Government Accountability Office, 2023). In Norway, women in 2019 held 37% of "all leader positions" (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2021).

Further, women are stereotypically associated with characteristics such as being sensitive, gentle, warm, and sympathetic. Men on the other hand are associated with being more assertive, dominant, and independent (Eagly and Karau, 2002). Not only are women associated with these adjectives, but they are expected to be that way. Just as men are expected to be as described above (Budworth & Mann, 2010; Heilman, 2001; Prentice & Carranca, 2003). If a person fails to follow these socially shared expectations regarding their characteristics, he or she must expect to receive negative outcomes (Rudman & Phelan, 2008; Williams & Tiedens, 2016).

Previous research suggests that men are attracted to competition (Flory et al, 2015), while women are not. He et al (2021) support the study done by Flory et al,

which says that women are less likely to enter competitions than men. We further see how this effect women in an economic way. Amongst MBA graduates, the gender difference in competitiveness accounted for 10% of the gender gap in earnings as late as 9 years after graduation (Reuben et al, 2015). In France, amongst economists, the gender difference in competitiveness accounted for 76% of the gender gap (Bosquet et al, 2019).

According to an article in Harvard Business Review, past research has shown that evolutionary pressure, the roles women traditionally hold, and social order is the reason behind why women are not as competitive as men (Kesebir, 2019). This article further elaborates that women and men in fact have different beliefs regarding competition. They did a test where they asked, among other questions, if the respondents felt that competition makes people perform better and if competition makes people work harder. Out of 2 331 people, where 49% were women, 51% were men, and the average age was 34 years, 63% of women were less convinced than men when it comes to if competition boosts performance, builds character, or leads to innovative solutions. Men also saw more of an upside to competition than women did. When the researchers asked the same respondents if the participants wanted a bonus based on how their performance compared to other's (bonus scheme) or their performance, regardless of how the others performed, 21% of women chose the bonus scheme while 36% of men chose the bonus scheme.

The objective to this study is to analyze how the difference between men and women regarding competition and promotion when an opt-out choice is introduced. More specifically, how the different genders are viewed when given an opt-out choice when competing against each other for promotion.

1.2 Research question

The research question for this paper will be:

“How will an opt-out choice frame gender differences in the decisions to compete for promotions? »

The purpose behind this research is to investigate the effect on gender differences when businesses are using an opt-out choice in a promotion recruitment situation. I will focus on the differences between women and men when they are competing against the opposite sex for a promotion – both where opt-in is used and opt-out is used.

This paper will try to answer if there is a difference between a man who do not opt-out of a job interview that might result in a promotion, and a woman who do not opt-out in the same situation. As well as, if there is a difference between the man and the woman who did actively choose to compete and had to apply for the job interview.

Further, I will investigate if there is a difference between the woman and the man in the regard of choosing to compete against the opposite sex. More precisely, I want to know how the participants would describe the different genders based on the fiction character's choice, and if there is a difference based on the person who competes' gender.

Towards the end, I will discuss how the participants feel morally when it comes to men and the woman who competes against the opposite sex, to see if there might be proof to a stereotypical gender difference.

For the last part, I want to investigate what the participations would do in the different scenarios themselves. In other words, I want to see if the participants feel that it is okay to compete against a friend and a college with an opt-in choice, or if it is better to compete when there is an opt-out choice.

02. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the first part of the review, I am looking into gender difference specifically in the context of competition. Further, I will dig deeper into first- and second-generation gender bias, before going into social expectations and cultural norms. Social expectations and norms will tell us a about how society view men and women historically, and if there is a reason to believe that this is why women might shy away from competition. Further, I will investigate the perception of a

leader based on gender. In other words, how employees, or future employees, look at leaders based on gender. If there is a difference, I will find out why and what that difference is. By looking into this, we might already get a feeling on how the participants in this paper will answer the questions they have been asked before looking at the results. Further, I will investigate goal formation for both genders, and how goals impact behavior. This is to understand if there is a simple reason behind the gender gap which we see at workplaces. At the end, I will look at the opt-out point of view, which this paper is all about. The goal is to give the readers an understanding of what an opt-out choice is, and if there is any reason to further investigate such a choice and use it actively in work competitions.

2.1 Gender difference regarding competition

According to Flory et al. (2015), there are studies that prove men are more attracted to competition than women. This is supported by He et al (2021), which says that women are less likely to enter competitions than men.

The article first article further examines the effects of competition on job entry decisions among male and female applicants by conducting natural field experiments. In other word, they studied whether men and women would respond differently to employment contracts characterized by competition and uncertainty. To secure that the subjects answers were not bias they also tested to see if there were a different between gender differences in coworkers and bosses.

The experiments were conducted by posting employment advertisements to an internet job- board in 16 major U.S cities. Two versions of the job were advertised. One ad presented a version of the position with male connotations, and the other ad removed these connotations. 6779 subjects participated in the first natural field experiment, and 2190 in the second.

The results of the study showed that female applicants were less likely to apply to a job offer when they were told about the competitive compensation regimes, compared to men who were offered the same regime. They also find that the gender of co-workers and the supervisor has little effect on gender gap in

applications for competitive workplaces. Overall, this study suggests that competition in the workplace may deter women from entering certain fields.

When it comes to gender differences, women are also confronted with factors such as career interruption due to motherhood, the lack of same-sex mentor and the stress of work-life imbalance (Hurley and Choudhary, 2016).

2.2 Second-generation gender bias

The social psychologist Faye Crosby found that most women are unaware of having personally been victims of gender discrimination. Women denies the discrimination even when it has happened, and they even see other women experience it (Ibarra et al., 2013).

According to Vijay Grover (2015) gender bias has been an issue since the origin of the civilized society and has been in the focus of public life just as long. It is recognized that bias has been implemented in family structure, social customs, and education on purpose.

When countries started to develop and change even more, women began their fight for a place and a position, most noticeable in the work area. To protect women's right in the workplace, amongst other countries, America addressed these problems through legislations and company-based rules (Batara et al., 2018). Even after this protection was made, there are still proof gender bias exists. Some of these are unique at specific workplaces. Therefore, Batara et al (2018) concluded that there are two different gender bias in the workplace: the first-generation gender bias, and the second-generation gender bias. First generation gender bias deals with discrimination against women in the society and workplace that are, one can call, "intentional in nature" (Rifkin, 2015). First generation bias occurs when the bias is done against an individual because of their gender, knowingly and intentionally (Grover, 2015). The second-generation gender bias does not need an intent to exclude, nor does it produce harm (Ibarra, Ely, & Kolb, 2013(a)). Further, one can describe second-generation gender bias as a subtle, not as visible, and often unintentional discrimination. It is defined as invisible barriers when it comes to women's advancement that may have its root in cultural beliefs

about gender, and workplace structures (Batara et al., 2018; Calás & Smircich, 2009; Ely & Meyerson, 2000; Kolb & McGinn, 2009; Madsen & Andrade, 2018; Sturm, 2001). This type of bias refers to an attitude that unconsciously affects the judgment and impression formation and can therefore result in behavior that is different from a person's beliefs (Greenwald & Krieger, 2006). As a conclusion, second-generation may therefore exist because of gender stereotypes and societal expectations (Rifkin, 2015).

2.3 Cultural norms and social expectations

Social roles include the shared beliefs and expectations attached to individuals who are part of a particular social group or occupy a certain position within society (Biddle, 1986; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Sarbin & Allen, 1968). Gender roles are the “consensual beliefs about the attributes of women and men” (pp. 574, Eagly & Karau, 2002) which tells us the roles that men and women are expected to fulfill. These beliefs are the foundation of both descriptive gender stereotype, and prescriptive gender stereotype. Descriptive gender stereotype, also known as descriptive norms, inform how men and women typically *are*, while prescriptive gender stereotype, also known as prescriptive norms, defines how men and women should be in terms of appropriate and inappropriate behaviors (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 2012; Heilman & Parks-Stamm, 2007). Women are expected to be kind, sympathetic, and friendly, which comes from the communal characteristics. Men on the other side are expected to be dominant, aggressive, and independent (Budworth & Mann, 2010; Heilman, 2001; Prentice & Carranca, 2003). It is important to underline that what is acceptable behavior for one gender is not acceptable for the other gender. To be more specific, women can be warm and friendly, but it is not acceptable for them to be dominant and independent (Moss-Racusin et al, 2010). The expected behavior for different genders can function as norms, and therefore there is a risk of receiving a sanction in form of negativity and social disapproval if these norms are neglected (Rudman & Glick, 2001).

Regarding the profession aspect, Eagly & Karau (2002) highlights two principal outcomes for women. The first principal describes that women are perceived to be less viable candidates for leadership roles. This is related to Heilman's (1983,

2001) 'lack of fit model', which unfolds the problem where one gender compares their personal characteristics with the stereotypical characteristics for the job opportunity, and the mismatch will reduce the individual's interest in pursuing the opportunity. One can also receive an expectation about how successful or unsuccessful the person will be (Heilman & Parks-Stamm 2007). Research is showing that the negative expectations have a significant effect on the employee selection processes (Davison & Burke, 2000).

The other principal is based on the result of women who engage in traditional leadership behaviors that will not be accepted and will result in backlash, for example social backlash (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Phelan & Rudman, 2010; Rudman & Phelan, 2008). Past research has in fact shown that female leaders who show agentic characteristics to be less likable (Williams and Tiedens, 2016) less hireable (Williams and Tiedens, 2016), and face more prejudice (Ferguson et al, 2018) than male leaders who display agentic characteristics. More so, women, compared to men, are perceived as less competent as well as lacking leadership potential (Heilman & Eagly, 2008; Moss-Racusin et al., 2012; Heilman & Parks-Stamm 2007), and are at higher risk to encounter skepticism, and challenges about both their ideas and their abilities (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008; Brooks et al., 2014; Butler & Geis, 1990; Heilman et al., 1989; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly et al, 1995). The perception of a dominant male leader as the norm will help male leaders to be perceived as a leader (Bowles et la, 2007; Brescoll, 2012; Heilman et al, 2004; Rudman, 1998). Women who are dominant leaders will be looked at as abnormal, and this will hinder them from being perceived as leaders (Kim et al., 2020).

Further, several studies over time have showed that a successful leader have the characteristics that resemble the stereotypical masculine characteristics, which will explaining how difficult it might be for a woman with characteristics that resemble other characteristics that is not masculine, to reach the leadership positions (Tremmel & Wahl, 2023). Therefore, it is proven that men can move up the company's hierarchies easier than women (Tremmel & Wahl, 2023). This is also an understanding of why women face the glass ceiling (Cotter et al., 2001). Lyness and Heilman (2006) says that promotions are not given to women before they have performed better ratings than men, and the standards for promotions are

stricter for women than they are for men. These inequalities that are being mentioned are often seen as the result of gender stereotypes (Tremmel & Wahl, 2023).

Despite the obvious stereotypes above, the last few years there have been a change in leadership stereotypes - they might be small, but there is a change (Eagly et al., 2020). Over a period of several decades, there have been studies that found a change in stereotypes which indicates that stereotypes of male leaders come closer to female leaders, and the other way around (Tremmel & Wahl, 2023). Leaders these days seem to have some stereotypical feminine characteristics. An example here is individualized consideration in transformational leadership (Sczesny et al., 2004; Eagly and Sczesny, 2009; Vinkenburg et al., 2011). However, the stereotypical feminine characteristics are seen as a “nice to have”, where the masculine characteristics are still seen as the most important characteristics (Vial & Napier, 2018).

2.4 The perception of a leader based on gender

Men and women have different preferences when it comes to the sex of their leader. Furthermore, men devalue female leaders more than women do (Tremmel & Wahl, 2023). Men also have more prejudices against female leaders than women (Hoffmann and Musch, 2019). According to Paustia-Underdahl et al., 2014, men think of themselves to be more effective than women. On the other side, women have reduced their favoritism for masculine characteristics in leaders. Women do not believe in the masculine stereotyping of leadership as they see men and women both equally suitable for a leadership position (Tremmel & Wahl 2023).

Those who have work experience are thinking less stereotypical regarding leaders and masculine stereotypes. Those who have no previous work experience are holding more on to the masculine stereotypes about leaders (Koenig et al., 2013). Further, people who are experienced working with both male and female leaders saw a greater comparable between women and leaders (Berkery et al., 2013). According to Koch et al., 2015, experienced professionals are less biased toward

male applicants.

It is shown that individuals who have a positive experience with female leaders feel that women have a better leadership skill. Those who do not have a prior positive experience with female leaders either feel the opposite or feel that women have less leadership skills than those with a positive experience. Furthermore, it is found that people who currently have a female leader, and people who are working in companies where there are many female leaders, have a reduced favoritism for masculine characteristics in leaders. It is also proven that women who have been in contact with female leaders also show reduced automatic stereotypical assumptions (Tremmel & Wahl 2023).

2.5 Goal formation and impact on behavior

The word “goal” is typically defined as: “a cognitive representation of a desired endpoint that impacts evaluations, emotions, and behaviors” (pp. 491, Fishbach & Ferguson, 2007). Goals may be indefinite and abstract or specific and concrete (i.e., lose 12 kg) (Jeannerod, 1997; Kornblu et al, 1990; Kruglanski et al, 2002; Miller et al, 1960; Powers, 1973). Decisions and behavior will often revolve around the goal that a person have set for themselves (Bandura, 1986; Carver & Sheier, 1999; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Gollwitzer, 1990; Latham & Locke, 1990; Mischel, Cantor, & Feldman, 1996; Fiske, 1989; Miller, Galanter, & Pribram, 1960; Norman & Shallice, 1986). Not all goals have the motivational force and impact on behavior that is criteria for it to be considered a goal. If one of your goals is to reach a position in the top tier, then you are more likely to engage in behaviors that will give you a professional advancement, such as looking for a possibility to get a promotion. However, if reaching a position in the top tier is not your goal, then you are less likely to engage in the same behaviors that would have given you a professional advancement. For example, you would not go looking for promotion or apply to a position in power.

Whatever the goal is, all goals have in common that they are formed by a mix of personal experience, other’s experiences, and social norms and expectations (Kruglanski et al, 2002).

2.6 Opt-out point of view

Throughout the life, there will come many situations where an individual would have to make choices. Many of these choices will be regarding selection processes such as promotions at work, which require a self-nomination. Women are less likely to self-promote themselves and to brag about their accomplishments (Daubman et al., 1992; Moss-Racusin, & Rudman, 2010) compared to men. Women are also less likely to seek out risk and competition (Flory et al, 2015; Niederle & Vesterlund, 2007,) while men are the opposite, and would gladly seek competition. Therefore, it is not a stretch to suspect that women might be less interested to participate in a competitive selection process (Bosquet et al, 2019; Exley et al, 2020). To this date, solutions that are named to reduce the gender difference in, amongst other things, promotions, have yet to show positive results (Kalev et al, 2006). These interventions have had a focus on diversity and unconscious bias training. A different approach which also have been proven to be not successful is training women to “lean in” (Sandberg, 2013). The reason for this goes back to an earlier chapter in this paper which states that women who are agnatically might receive backlash or social penalty for being the opposite of what is stereotypical and expected as a female.

A study done by He et al (2021) talks about a different solution: introducing a default nudge. In this study they ran three experiments where they compared different rates of competition for different gender under an opt-in versus an opt-out frame. In the end, they were able to provide laboratory and field experimental evidence regarding the default nudge. The article states that the gender imbalance which exists due to the issues named in the last paragraph, can be changed if a default nudge was added. In other words, changing the choice to enter a competitive task from where applicants themselves must actively choose to compete, to a default where applicants are automatically enrolled in the competition without doing anything, is stated as the solution in this article. The idea behind the study was to find a different path than the traditional interventions that can be assumed exists to “fix women” or to change people’s mind. They wanted to focus on changing the architecture of decision to compete itself (He et al, 2021).

03. METHODOLOGY

In the following I will discuss the methodology of the study. I will be elaborating on our approach to design, data collection, and measures.

3.1 Research design

For this research, the proposed methodology is quantitative research. In this case, I will be using data collection in form of a vignette. The vignette will be sent out per email or message – either Facebook or SMS. The participants will get a link that leads them to the vignette. Further, the vignette will randomize the participants, and make them read one of four scenarios. All scenarios have in common that they start by describing which gender the main character is, and which gender the bicharacter, the friend, is. Further, the vignette will lead the participants through a fictional story. $\frac{1}{4}$ will read about a man who goes to lunch with a female colleague. At this lunch she expresses how much she would love a specific promotion that she applied to. When the male employee is back at the office, he finds that he is automatically enrolled for an interview to the same position as his female friend really wanted. He does not choose to opt-out. $\frac{1}{4}$ will read the same story, but when the male employee gets back to the office, he has to opt-in for the job interview, which he does. $\frac{1}{4}$ will read the first story, but the gender switches. Same goes for the last $\frac{1}{4}$ - they will read the last story, but the female will opt-in, and the male is the one who expresses how much he would love the position at lunch.

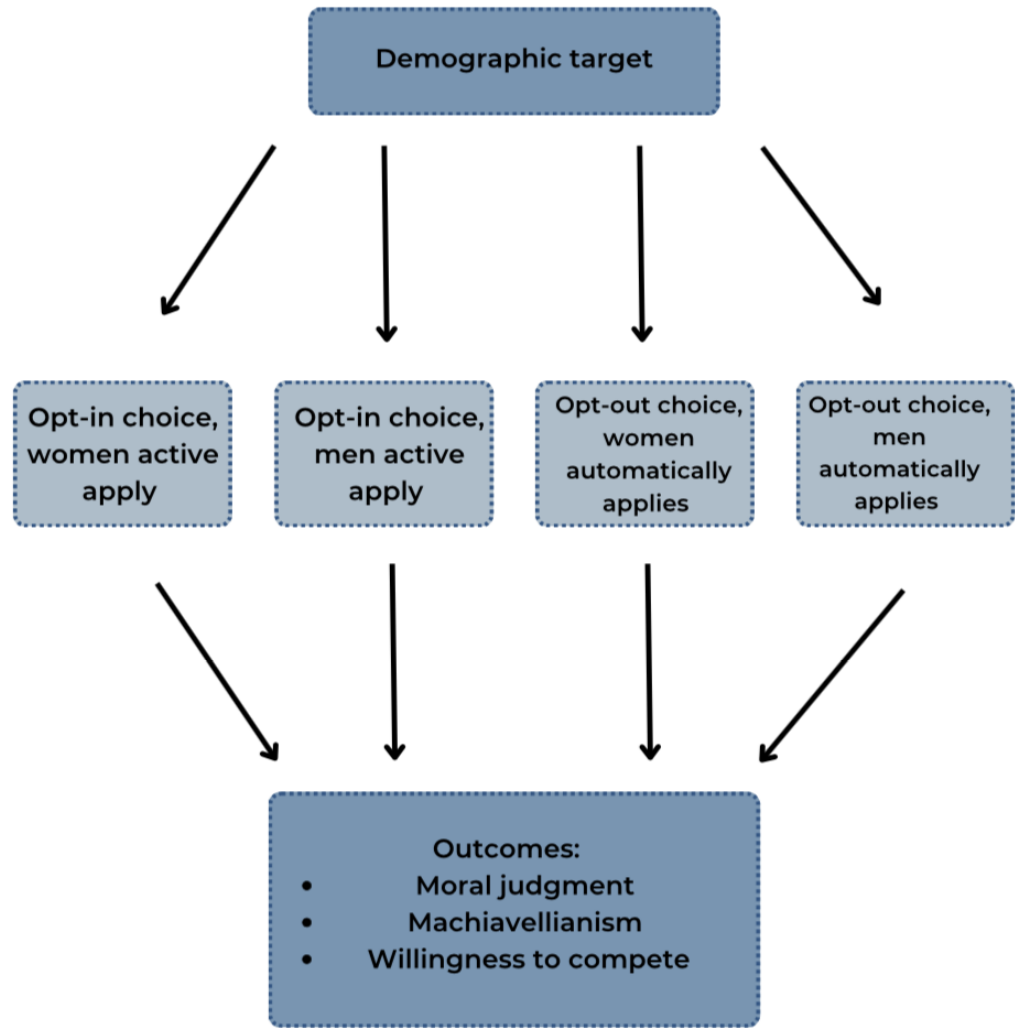
After reading the story they have been randomized to read, the participants must answer a few questions. See appendix for further elaboration. On the first page there will be asked questions regarding the story. These questions will help us understand how the participants feel about different issues regarding competition and gender, and we can see if there is a difference with the responds when there is an opt-out choice rather than an opt-in choice. We also ask if the participant would apply to the job described. At this question we gave them four alternatives: Would the person most defiantly apply, is the person somewhat sure that they would apply, is the person somewhat sure that they would not apply, or would the

person most defiantly not apply. This will be further discussed under 4. Results.

The last questions ask about demographic variables such as age, gender, earnings, work sector, if the participant is a full-time employee or a student, if one is a leader at the workspace, and about education. Regarding gender, we included three options: a. Male; b. Female; and c. Other / Do not wish to say. A third option was included as it is in line with gender identity inclusivity.

Further, the questionnaires and the stories were published in Norwegian. According to Kahneman & Egan (2011) participants should be able to answer questions in their first language to prevent misunderstanding. This will also help with the reliability of the results. We did not send the vignette to anyone who does not fully understand Norwegian, nor was it translated to anyone.

The questionnaire about the vignette is meant to measure the respondent's attitude regarding the presented narrative about gender and competition, and the difference when given an opt-out and opt-in choice. We will measure the attitude by using a standard Likertskala from 1 to 7. On the scale, 1 is «does not agree at all», and 7 is “totally agree”, on the middle we have the number 4 which is ”neutral” (Likert, 1932).



(Model 1: A demonstration of the design)

3.2 Sample

Samples need to be of an adequate size to generalize the findings and to avoid sampling errors or other bias (Taherdoost, 2016). Sample size might be the most significant factor that affects the statistical power of a study - the more answers the study gets, the more reliable the study's results are seen (Dawson, 2014). However, that does not mean that a smaller sample size is indicated as lack of reliability (Dawson, 2014).

The goal for this study was to reach between 300 and 400 participants. At the end, I received 305 clicks, and 212 respondents who completed all the questions in the survey.

04. RESULT

4.1 General overview

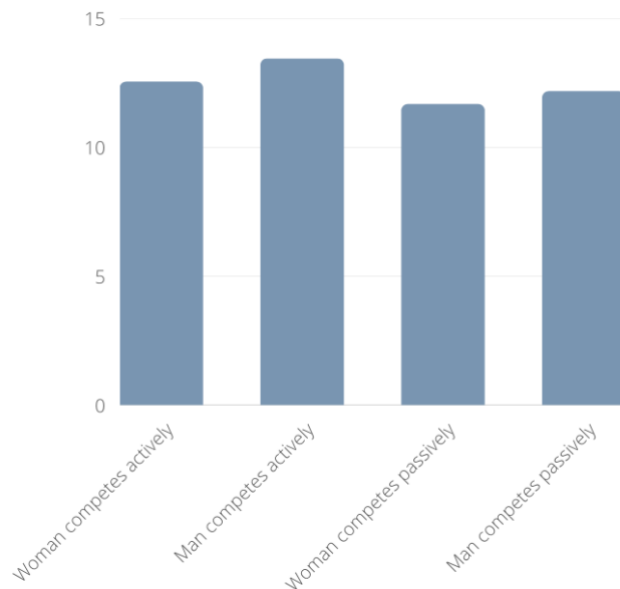
Out of the 305 clicks I received, there were 212 people who completed the survey. This leaves us with a 70.49% answering rate. Further, we see that out of the 212 respondents, there were 68 (32%) who answered male, 142 (66.98%) who answered female, and 2 people who chose 'other' (0.94%). We see that there is more than double of the respondents who are women. The age ranges from 18 years to 71 years, which gives a mean age of 30 years. 125 respondents (58.41%) have completed a bachelor's degree, 28 (13.08%) have completed a master's degree or higher, and 61 (28.50%) have completed high school and / or middle school. When asked if the respondents were top leaders, intermediate managers, or not leaders, there were 129 people (60.28%) who answered that they were not leaders, 71 who answered that they were intermediate managers (33.18%), and 13 (6.07%) answered that they were top leaders.

4.2 Moral judgment

The first thing we are going to investigate is moral judgment. In the survey, I asked the respondent if they found Kim, the main character, to be moral or immoral for choosing to compete against his / her friend and colleague. There were three statements, and the answers were scale 1 to 7. These statements were: "It is morally acceptable to compete like this", "It is unethical to compete like this against a friend / colleague", and: "It is wrong by Kim to compete like this". There were 237 respondents that responded to all three statements. The result is shown in the model below.

| ManipulertVariabel | Mean | N | Std. Deviation |
|--------------------|---------|-----|----------------|
| DameMotMannAktiv | 12.5402 | 58 | 4.14213 |
| MannMotDameAktiv | 13.4407 | 59 | 4.53105 |
| DameMotMannPassiv | 11.6722 | 60 | 3.69888 |
| MannMotDamePassiv | 12.1722 | 60 | 3.98656 |
| Total | 12.4515 | 237 | 4.12358 |

(Model 2: Results of moral judgment statements)



(Model 3: Results of moral judgment statements presented in a bar chart)

As we can see, it appears that the respondents found that a man who competes actively against a woman (13.44) is more frowned upon than any other situation that were described to the respondents. If a woman chose to compete actively against a man, the respondent found that she was nearly as bad as the man in the opt-in choice, but she came better out of it than the man (12.54). In other words, it looks like women who wants to compete against the opposite gender actively is not viewed as negatively as a man who wants to compete actively against the opposite gender.

Further, we find that a man who passively wants to compete against a woman is not as frowned upon as the first scenario (12.17). We also see that if a woman wants to passively compete against a man, she is not viewed as bad as if she wanted to compete actively (11.67).

As a result, we see that those who compete passively, in other words, compete by having an opt-out choice, are not being viewed as morally unacceptable as those who want to compete without an opt-out choice. No matter the scenario, we see that the respondents feel that it is more morally acceptable for a woman to compete against a man than a man to compete against a woman.

I conducted a one-way to compare the means of the four groups. ($F(3, 233) =$

1.971, $p = 0.119$). Opt-out choice is seen to have a small effect, but the effect is not big enough for it to be statistically significant.

| | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|------|
| Between Groups | 99.303 | 3 | 33.101 | 1.971 | .119 |
| Within Groups | 3913.611 | 233 | 16.797 | | |
| Total | 4012.914 | 236 | | | |

(Model 4: One-way of moral judgment)

4.3 Machiavellianism

The next result that I found is regarding eight statements that investigate how the respondents feel about the fictional characters. More specifically, how would the respondents rate the characters on Machiavellianism is the concept of one's propensity to distrust others, engage in amoral manipulation, seek control over others, and seek status for oneself (Dahling et al., 2008).

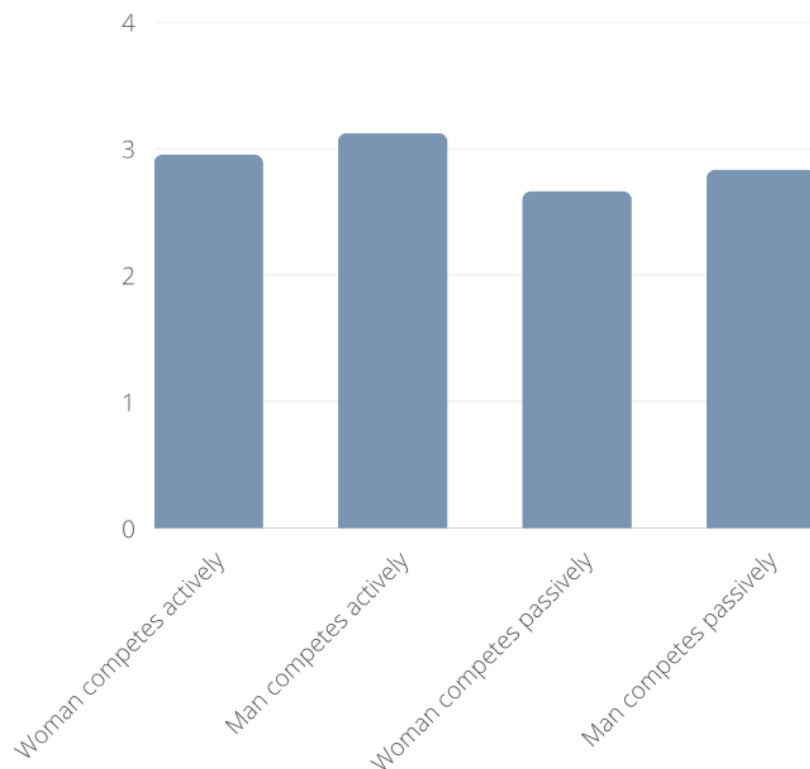
As mentioned, there were eight statements linked to this segment of the result. These statements were: "... is willing to be unethical if it will help the person become successful", "... is willing to sabotage for others if they threaten the person's goals or goal setting", "... is willing to cheat if there is a low risk of being caught", "... believes that lying is necessary to maintain a competitive advantage", "... believes that the only reason to talk to others is to receive information that benefits him or her", "... believes that status is a sign of success in life", "... has a high focus on acquiring wealth", and "... wants to become rich and powerful." These statements helped me find a correlation behind the fictional character's choices, and how the respondent viewed the character accorded to Machiavellianism traits.

I found that women who compete actively against men are viewed as a person with less Machiavellianism traits (2.94) than men who compete actively against a woman (3.12). We see that women who compete passively against men (2.661) are viewed as individuals with higher Machiavellianism traits than men who compete passively against women (2.578). This result struck me as unexpected. I

did believe that men would be viewed as a person with more Machiavellianism traits than women, no matter the circumstances.

| ManipulertVariabel | Mean | N | Std. Deviation |
|--------------------|--------|-----|----------------|
| DameMotMannAktiv | 2.9464 | 56 | 1.17909 |
| MannMotDameAktiv | 3.1227 | 54 | 1.26814 |
| DameMotMannPassiv | 2.6614 | 55 | 1.12825 |
| MannMotDamePassiv | 2.5778 | 53 | 1.25772 |
| Total | 2.8286 | 218 | 1.22006 |

(Model 5: Results of Machiavellianism traits)



(Model 6: Results of Machiavellianism traits presented in a bar chart)

The results show that both opt-out and opt-in choices have the most to say regarding how men are viewed when looking at the Machiavellianism traits. We can see this because men are rated those with highest Machiavellianism traits when the organization is working with an opt-in solution, and they are rated with the lowest Machiavellianism traits when the organization is working with an opt-out solution. This finding draws a conclusion towards that an opt-out choice benefits men in a way that makes the men freer to compete against women

without any social backlash.

This result was further conducted in a one-way to see if the result was significant. ($F(3, 214) = 2.354, p = 0.073$). We can see that the result is not significant.

| | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|------|
| Between Groups | 10.319 | 3 | 3.440 | 2.354 | .073 |
| Within Groups | 312.695 | 214 | 1.461 | | |
| Total | 323.014 | 217 | | | |

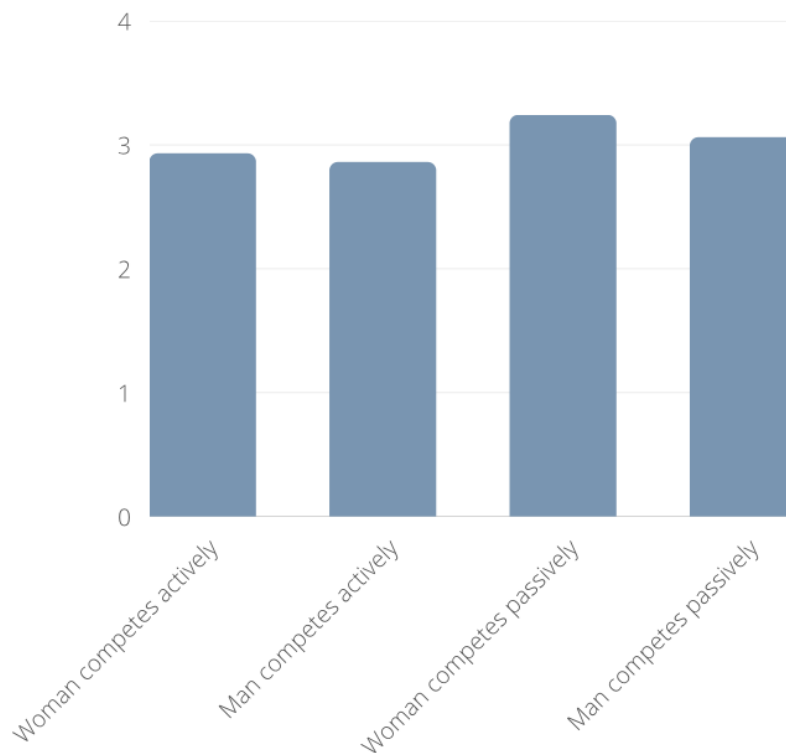
(Model 7: One-way of Machiavellianism traits)

4.4 Willingness to compete

The last result revolves around the willingness to compete. More specifically, I wanted to see how the respondents felt if they were the main character in the story. The results show that when the respondent read about a woman who actively competed against a man, the respondent was more likely to not compete for the promotion (2.93). On the other side, if the respondent read that the main character was a woman who passively competing for the promotion against a man, the respondents felt that they would most likely or defiantly apply for the promotion (3.24). When the respondent read about a man who competed actively against a woman, the respondents were more likely to not compete for the promotion (2.86). On the other side, if the respondent read about a woman who competed actively against a man, he or she was more likely to compete for the promotion (3.24). We see that no matter the gender, when it comes to actively competing against a friend and colleagues, the respondents say that they would not compete or that they were sure that they would not compete (2.93 and 2.86). This proves that respondents are more comfortable with competing when there is an opt-out choice than when there is an opt-in choice.

| ManipulertVariabel | Mean | N | Std. Deviation |
|--------------------|------|-----|----------------|
| DameMotMannAktiv | 2.93 | 58 | .934 |
| MannMotDameAktiv | 2.86 | 59 | .973 |
| DameMotMannPassiv | 3.24 | 59 | .703 |
| MannMotDamePassiv | 3.20 | 56 | .724 |
| Total | 3.06 | 232 | .853 |

(Model 8: Result of willingness to compete)



(Model 9: Result of willingness to compete presented in a bar chart)

Further, I did a one-way ANOVA, and I found that there is a significant difference, ($F(3, 228) = 2.866, p = 0.037$), for this result.

| | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|------|
| Between Groups | 6.115 | 3 | 2.038 | 2.866 | .037 |
| Within Groups | 162.157 | 228 | .711 | | |
| Total | 168.272 | 231 | | | |

(Model 10: One-way of willingness to compete)

To dig deeper into the results, I did a Tukey Post Hoc test.

| (I) ManipulertVariabel | (J) ManipulertVariabel | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig. | 95% Confidence Interval | |
|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|------------|------|-------------------------|-------------|
| | | | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| DameMotMannAktiv | MannMotDameAktiv | .067 | .156 | .974 | -.34 | .47 |
| | DameMotMannPassiv | -.306 | .156 | .205 | -.71 | .10 |
| | MannMotDamePassiv | -.265 | .158 | .337 | -.67 | .14 |
| MannMotDameAktiv | DameMotMannAktiv | -.067 | .156 | .974 | -.47 | .34 |
| | DameMotMannPassiv | -.373 | .155 | .080 | -.77 | .03 |
| | MannMotDamePassiv | -.332 | .157 | .153 | -.74 | .08 |
| DameMotMannPassiv | DameMotMannAktiv | .306 | .156 | .205 | -.10 | .71 |
| | MannMotDameAktiv | .373 | .155 | .080 | -.03 | .77 |
| | MannMotDamePassiv | .041 | .157 | .994 | -.37 | .45 |
| MannMotDamePassiv | DameMotMannAktiv | .265 | .158 | .337 | -.14 | .67 |
| | MannMotDameAktiv | .332 | .157 | .153 | -.08 | .74 |
| | DameMotMannPassiv | -.041 | .157 | .994 | -.45 | .37 |

(Model 11: Tukey Post Hoc test of willingness to compete)

I found a significant difference where men actively compete against women, and where women passively compete against men. To conclude, anyone who competes for a promotion while having an opt-out choice is seen as less cynical, as mentioned earlier, which might make it easier to compete against each other despite of gender. As we see from this result, the respondents feel more positive, and they are more willing to compete when there is an opt-out choice.

05. DISCUSSION

Above, I have presented the results from a survey done specifically for this research, where I had a total of 212 respondents. I explored how the respondent felt about a man competing against a woman, and how they felt about a woman competing against a man. In both scenarios, the respondents also gave me an insight to see if there is a difference between competing actively (opt-in) or passively (opt-out). I further looked into what they thought about the different scenarios that were described, and how they would react if they were “Kim.”

The results somewhat agree with the article done by He et al (2021). I did not specifically investigate if an opt-out choice would increase the number of female applicants for a promotion, but I did find that there is a difference in how the respondents view those who compete with an opt-in and an opt-out choice. Also, I found a difference where the respondents were to choose if they themselves would like to apply or not if they were in Kim’s situation, and I found a significant

difference where the respondent would rather compete if there was an opt-out choice.

When operating with an opt-in, men are seen as the big bad person, and frowned upon by the respondents. This is the reaction from society, even though men are expected to be more dominant and aggressive than women (Eagly and Karau, 2002.), and men are more competitive by nature (Flory et al. (2015). The reaction might be reasoned with the fact that society view women as a minority group (Jaworski, 2009), and to follow social norms one must be careful to not say and do something which the society might look at as discrimination or prejudice. In other words, society might frown upon the fact that a man chose to compete against a person with a minority background.

Further, we see that men who compete with an opt-in choice is viewed as people with the most Machiavellianism traits. If we look at the women who compete actively in this study, the respondent feel that those women have less Machiavellianism traits. However, it is important to underline that the respondents do not feel great that either of the gender competed actively. One of the reasons for this might be because of Janteloven (Sandemose, 1933). In Norway we are taught that nobody is better than anyone else, and if we have that mentality when analyzing the answer, it might seem logical that the respondents may think that Kim should not apply for the position actively as Kim is “no better than the friend” and should not actively try to take away the friend’s possibility for a promotion.

The results found in this research does not match my two statements under *abstract* where I thought that men would get away easier with competing actively against a woman, and women would receive more backlash for competing actively than men. I found this very fascinating as the society apparently do not accept men to compete against women, even though it might be in their nature to be more willingly to compete.

5.1 Limitation and further research

For further research, I would firstly recommend getting more participants. I found that only one out of three measures were significant, which could be justified with the numbers of participants. If there were more respondents, we might have seen a significant result in moral judgment and Machiavellianism as well. There is also important to mention the gender difference regarding the respondents. It is not certain that the answers would be different if there were more gender equality among the respondents, but at the same time, I cannot say that the answers would not be different. This might also be a result of the lack of respondents in the first place.

I also think that age, education, and work experience should be looked deeper into. Especially, if someone was to replicate this study. It would be interesting to see if these three factors, including gender, will have a pattern regarding the answers. In other words, to see if an 18-year-old boy with no work experience and no higher education than high school would find a man competing against a woman actively to be right or wrong, and if a male top manager at the age of 50 would feel that it is wrong to compete against a woman actively.

Further, I believe that it would be important to investigate if there is a difference between the male participants and the female participant regarding their willingness to compete for a promotion with an opt-out and opt-in solution. In my survey I did ask the participants about this, but I believe that the question I asked regarding if the respondent would apply for the job or not, was more about the main character in the story and his / her situation, and not necessary a clear answer if the respondent would like to compete in real life. I found a difference between the willingness to compete with an opt-out and opt-in. For further research, there should be more emphasis on the gender that is answering. The question should also be more specific for the respondent, and not a question connected to a fictional character in a fictional story.

To add to the last point, it will be interesting to test the negative sides of an opt-out choice. As mentioned earlier, according to Flory et al. (2015), men are more attracted to competition than women. If the organization add an opt-out choice, one can argue that the organization also erases the competition. This might affect those who do thrive on competing, and it might not be only men who are affected

by this, but there are women who also thrive for the competition. As we saw earlier in the paper, Harvard Business Review mentioned that there were 21% women who chose the bonus scheme while 36% of men chose the bonus scheme. There is a 15% difference between these numbers, but this also indicates that a little more than 1/5 of the female respondents would like to compete.

The last point for further research is that it would be interested to see results from across the world and compare the answers to see if there is a significant difference somewhere. As mentioned, social norms and cultural expectations have a root in us, even if we are not aware of it. And the same goes for Janteloven, even if it is not a standard practice anymore, it is a possibility that Norwegians are still thinking about it.

06. CONCLUSION

The findings from this research highlights the difference an opt-out choice might have if used when employees are competing for a promotion. More specifically, the results show that opt-out choice is something worth studying more as it has a significantly effect when it comes to the choice regarding competition.

Referring to my research goal, which was to investigate: *“How will an opt-out choice frame gender differences in the decisions to compete for promotions?”*. The results draw conclusions towards that an opt-out choice will help the employees with competing without having to deal with social expectations and norms. By using an opt-out, I found that both women and men can compete against each other without there being negative backlash which it would have been if they openly and actively competed against each other. According to the results, even if it was not significant, the difference has more to say about men than women. In other words, it looks like an opt-out choice with giving men a possible solution as to how to compete against women without getting backlashed or being seen as the big bad person.

This research show that an opt-out choice makes it easier for the recruiter to find the best possible match for the job. This statement can be made as we found that

the willingness to compete increased when an opt-out choice was mentioned. In other words, both men and women feel like they can compete when there is an opt-out choice, and therefore the recruiter might have more applicants that fit the role. However, if this opt-out choice makes more women compete is a different question that needs to be researched further.

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08. APPENDIX

For this part, I will show the survey. Under, you will first see the four different scenarios, and then the questions that the respondents had to answer.

8.1 Opt-out choice: A man is competing against a woman

«Kim er en 33 år gammel mannlig medarbeider i et stort konsern. En dag spiser han lunch med Berit, en kollega i samme konsern, som også er en god venn. Berit spør Kim om han har sett at det har blitt utlyst en ledig lederstilling i organisasjonen de begge jobber i. Kim hadde ikke sett den stillingen. Berit forklarer at hun selv er veldig interessert i å få denne lederstillingen, og at hun allerede har søkt på den. "Å, jeg håper så intenst at jeg får den stillingen", sier Berit til Kim.

«Etter lunch går Kim tilbake til pulten, og åpner eposten sin. Han har fått en epost fra konsernets HR avdeling om en ledig lederstilling. Kim forstår at dette er den samme stillingen som vennen hans fortalte om. Kim leser stillingsbeskrivelsen, og ser at dette er en stilling han også gjerne kunne tenke seg. I eposten står det at HR-avdelingen anser Kim for å være kvalifisert for stillingen, og dermed automatisk vil vurdere Kim som intern søker. Dersom Kim ikke ønsker å bli vurdert som søker på stillingen må han gi beskjed til HR-avdelingen om dette. Kim gir ingen slik beskjed til HR-avdelingen, vel vitende om at dette setter ham i direkte konkurranse med en venn om en ledig stilling som bare en av dem kan få.»

8.2 Opt-in choice: A man is competing against a woman.

«Kim er en 33 år gammel mannlig medarbeider i et stort konsern. En dag spiser han lunch med Berit, en kollega i samme konsern, som også er en god venn. Berit spør Kim om han har sett at det har blitt utlyst en ledig lederstilling i organisasjonen de begge jobber i. Kim hadde ikke sett den stillingen. Berit forklarer at hun selv er veldig interessert i å få denne lederstillingen, og at hun allerede har søkt på den. "Å, jeg håper så intenst at jeg får den stillingen", sier Berit til Kim.»

«Etter lunch går Kim tilbake til pulten, og søker opp den aktuelle lederstillingen på konsernets interne nettsider. Kim leser stillingsbeskrivelsen, og ser at dette er en stilling han også gjerne kunne tenke seg. Han velger derfor å sende inn sin egen søknad på stillingen, vel vitende om at dette setter ham i direkte konkurranse med en venn om en ledig stilling som bare en av dem kan få.»

8.3 Opt-in choice: A woman is competing against a man

«Kim er en 33 år gammel kvinnelig medarbeider i et stort konsern. En dag spiser hun lunch med Bjarte, en kollega i samme konsern, som også er en god venn. Bjarte spør Kim om hun har sett at det har blitt utlyst en ledig lederstilling i organisasjonen de begge jobber i. Kim hadde ikke sett den stillingen. Bjarte forklarer at han selv er veldig interessert i å få denne lederstillingen, og at hun allerede har søkt på den. "Å, jeg håper så intenst at jeg får den stillingen", sier Bjarte til Kim.»

«Etter lunch går Kim tilbake til pulten, og søker opp den aktuelle lederstillingen på konsernets interne nettsider. Kim leser stillingsbeskrivelsen, og ser at dette er en stilling hun også gjerne kunne tenke seg. Hun velger derfor å sende inn sin egen søknad på stillingen, vel vitende om at dette setter henne i direkte konkurranse med en venn om en ledig stilling som bare en av dem kan få.»

8.3 Opt-out choice: A woman is competing against a man

«Kim er en 33 år gammel kvinnelig medarbeider i et stort konsern. En dag spiser hun lunch med Bjarte, en kollega i samme konsern, som også er en god venn. Bjarte spør Kim om hun har sett at det har blitt utlyst en ledig lederstilling i organisasjonen de begge jobber i. Kim hadde ikke sett den stillingen. Bjarte forklarer at han selv er veldig interessert i å få denne lederstillingen, og at hun allerede har søkt på den. "Å, jeg håper så intenst at jeg får den stillingen", sier Bjarte til Kim.»

«Etter lunch går Kim tilbake til pulten, og åpner eposten sin. Hun har fått en epost fra konsernets HR avdeling om en ledig lederstilling. Kim forstår at dette er den samme stillingen som vennens fortalte om. Kim leser stillingsbeskrivelsen, og ser at dette er en stilling hun også gjerne kunne tenke seg. I eposten står det at HR-avdelingen anser Kim for å være kvalifisert for stillingen, og dermed automatisk vil vurdere Kim som intern søker. Dersom Kim ikke ønsker å bli vurdert som søker på stillingen må han gi beskjed til HR-avdelingen om dette. Kim gir ingen slik beskjed til HR-avdelingen, vel vitende om at dette setter henne i direkte konkurranse med en venn om en ledig stilling som bare en av dem kan få.»

8.5 The questions for the survey

Det er moralsk akseptabelt å konkurrere på denne måten

| | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Veldig uenig | 2. Uenig | 3. Litt uenig | 4. Nøytral | 5. Litt enig | 6. Enig | 7. Veldig enig |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Det er uetisk å konkurrere med en venn og kollega på denne måten

| | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Veldig uenig | 2. Uenig | 3. Litt uenig | 4. Nøytral | 5. Litt enig | 6. Enig | 7. Veldig enig |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Det er galt av Kim å konkurrere om denne stillingen

| | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|----------------------------------|---|
| 1. Veldig uenig <input type="radio"/> | 2. Uenig <input type="radio"/> | 3. Litt uenig <input type="radio"/> | 4. Nøytral <input type="radio"/> | 5. Litt enig <input type="radio"/> | 6. Enig <input type="radio"/> | 7. Veldig enig <input type="radio"/> |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|----------------------------------|---|

Hva ville du valgt dersom du befant deg i samme situasjon som Kim?

| | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| 1. Helt sikker på at jeg ikke ville søkt <input type="radio"/> | 2. Nokså sikker på at jeg ikke ville søkt <input type="radio"/> | 3. Nokså sikker på at jeg ville søkt <input type="radio"/> | 4. Helt sikker på at jeg ville søkt <input type="radio"/> |
|---|--|---|---|

Les hvert spørsmål som om de begynner med "Kim virker å være den typen person som..."

... er villig til å være uetisk hvis det vil hjelpe en selv med å bli suksessrik.

| | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|----------------------------------|---|
| 1. Veldig uenig <input type="radio"/> | 2. Uenig <input type="radio"/> | 3. Litt uenig <input type="radio"/> | 4. Nøytral <input type="radio"/> | 5. Litt enig <input type="radio"/> | 6. Enig <input type="radio"/> | 7. Veldig enig <input type="radio"/> |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|----------------------------------|---|

... er villig til å sabotere for andre hvis de truer en selv med egne mål/målsettinger.

| | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|----------------------------------|---|
| 1. Veldig uenig <input type="radio"/> | 2. Uenig <input type="radio"/> | 3. Litt uenig <input type="radio"/> | 4. Nøytral <input type="radio"/> | 5. Litt enig <input type="radio"/> | 6. Enig <input type="radio"/> | 7. Veldig enig <input type="radio"/> |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|----------------------------------|---|

... er villig til å jukse dersom det er lav sannsynlighet for å bli tatt.

| | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|----------------------------------|---|
| 1. Veldig uenig <input type="radio"/> | 2. Uenig <input type="radio"/> | 3. Litt uenig <input type="radio"/> | 4. Nøytral <input type="radio"/> | 5. Litt enig <input type="radio"/> | 6. Enig <input type="radio"/> | 7. Veldig enig <input type="radio"/> |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|----------------------------------|---|

... tror at å lyve er nødvendig for å opprettholde et lavt konkurransefortrinn ovenfor andre.

| | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|----------------------------------|---|
| 1. Veldig uenig <input type="radio"/> | 2. Uenig <input type="radio"/> | 3. Litt uenig <input type="radio"/> | 4. Nøytral <input type="radio"/> | 5. Litt enig <input type="radio"/> | 6. Enig <input type="radio"/> | 7. Veldig enig <input type="radio"/> |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|----------------------------------|---|

... mener at eneste grunnen til å snakke med andre, er for å få informasjon som en kan bruke for å gange seg selv.

| | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|----------------------------------|---|
| 1. Veldig uenig <input type="radio"/> | 2. Uenig <input type="radio"/> | 3. Litt uenig <input type="radio"/> | 4. Nøytral <input type="radio"/> | 5. Litt enig <input type="radio"/> | 6. Enig <input type="radio"/> | 7. Veldig enig <input type="radio"/> |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|----------------------------------|---|

... mener at status er et godt tegn på suksess i livet.

| | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|----------------------------------|---|
| 1. Veldig uenig <input type="radio"/> | 2. Uenig <input type="radio"/> | 3. Litt uenig <input type="radio"/> | 4. Nøytral <input type="radio"/> | 5. Litt enig <input type="radio"/> | 6. Enig <input type="radio"/> | 7. Veldig enig <input type="radio"/> |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|----------------------------------|---|

... har et høyt fokus på å tilegne seg rikdom.

| | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|----------------------------------|---|
| 1. Veldig uenig <input type="radio"/> | 2. Uenig <input type="radio"/> | 3. Litt uenig <input type="radio"/> | 4. Nøytral <input type="radio"/> | 5. Litt enig <input type="radio"/> | 6. Enig <input type="radio"/> | 7. Veldig enig <input type="radio"/> |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|----------------------------------|---|

... ønsker å bli rik og mektig.

| | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|----------------------------------|---|
| 1. Veldig uenig <input type="radio"/> | 2. Uenig <input type="radio"/> | 3. Litt uenig <input type="radio"/> | 4. Nøytral <input type="radio"/> | 5. Litt enig <input type="radio"/> | 6. Enig <input type="radio"/> | 7. Veldig enig <input type="radio"/> |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|----------------------------------|---|

Da Kim skulle konkurrere om lederstillingen behøvde h*n ikke aktivt søke på den. Alle kvalifiserte medarbeidere ble automatisk ansett som søkere på stillingen, med mindre de sa ifra om at de ikke ville bli vurdert til den.

Korrekt - Kim ble automatisk ansett som søker

Ikke korrekt - Kim måtte aktivt søke på stillingen

Husker ikke/fikk jeg ikke med meg

Hvilket kjønn hadde Kim i beskrivelsen du leste?

Kim var en mann

Kim var ei dame

Husker ikke/fikk jeg ikke med meg

Hvilket kjønn hadde vennen til Kim i beskrivelsen du leste?

Vennen var en mann

Vennen var ei dame

Husker ikke/fikk jeg ikke med meg

Hvor gammel er du

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Alder



Hvilket kjønn har du?

Kvinne

Mann

Annet/Ønsker ikke å oppgi

Hvor mye tjener du i året (i NOK)?

- Mellom 0 og 100 000
- Mellom 100 000 og 200 000
- Mellom 200 000 og 300 000
- Mellom 300 000 og 400 000
- Mellom 400 000 og 500 000
- Mellom 500 000 og 600 000
- Mellom 600 000 og 700 000
- Mellom 700 000 og 800 000
- Mellom 800 000 og 900 000
- Mellom 900 000 og 1 000 000

Over 1 000 000

I hvilken sektor arbeider du?

- Offentlig sektor
- Privat sektor
- Ingen av delene/arbeider ikke

Er du leder på din arbeidsplass?

- Jeg er ikke leder
- Jeg er mellomleder
- Jeg er toppleder

Hva er din høyest fullførte utdanning?

Barneskolen

Ungdomsskolen

Videregående skole

Høyskole/universitet bachelor eller mellomfag

Høyskole/universitet mastergrad/hovedfag

Doktorgrad