



Master's degree thesis

IDR950 Sport Management

From grassroots to elite: An exploratory study of female referees in Norwegian football

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Preface

This master thesis marks the end of a two-year master's program in sport management at Molde University College.

The thesis topic was developed as a result of an internship at the referee department in the Norwegian Football Association. I want to thank all the members of the referee department who made me feel welcome from day one, and a special thanks to Jørn Thomas Smedsrud, who was my mentor during the internship.

I want to thank my supervisor Solveig Straume for the help and guidance. Without your advice, this thesis would most likely look like a modernistic piece of art! Also, a big thank you to Gandrudbakken Etiketter, who provided me with a working space during the thesis.

Finally, my sincerest gratitude towards the elite female referees who participated in this study. Without you sharing your experiences and thoughts, there would be no study, and therefore I wish you all the best in your future referee careers and life!

Summary

Introduction and context: The purpose of this study was to explore the motivation behind starting and pursuing a career, in addition to challenges linked to gender in elite female football referees in Norway.

Literature review: Since the literature on female football referees is limited, additional studies of similar team sports are included. The majority of the studies origins from a western society, mainly North America, with some additions from Scandinavia, the UK and South Korea.

Theoretical framework: The empirical data are discussed through the lens of the Referee retention scale, trickle-down effect, social theory, gender stereotypes, and the multi-level framework.

Method: This study used an exploratory research design, with a qualitative approach with six in-depth semi-constructed interviews with active elite female referees.

Findings and Conclusions: The findings identified financial factors, social factors, development and mentoring, recognition and resources, passion, role models, decision-making and personal gain as contributors to starting and pursuing a career as an elite referee. Factors that are supported by previous studies and the Referee retention scale. Challenges linked to gender were stereotyping and sexism.

Contribution of the thesis:

This study has given a more comprehensive understanding of motivational and retentional factors in elite female referees. Furthermore, identified challenges linked to gender. Lastly, it has also contributed to narrowing some of the research gaps on female football referees.

Keywords: Elite female football referees, referee retention, gender stereotyping, Norwegian Football Association, referee recruitment

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1.0 Introduction

Women playing football in England have been recorded as early as the 1800s. Between 1911 and 1921, female football experienced a rapid interest with growing spectator numbers (Williams & Hess, 2015). For example, in a game between Preston and Helen's in 1920, it was reported that 53.000 people were in the crowd. Despite the popularity, the English football association, with many others, banned female football, stating that football was unsuitable for women (ibid). Since then, females who want to practice football have faced great adversity and negative attitudes (Ovèdie Skogvang, 2006). Regardless of the opposing perspective, female football was slowly expanding as pioneering countries like France, Italy, and the Nordic countries allowed females to participate in football (ibid). Today, football is the most prominent female sport globally, with 13.36 million girls and women playing organized football, 63.126 female coaches, and 80.545 female referees (FIFA, 2019). According to Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), 347 million USD was spent on women's football by the member associations in 2018, and with 74% of the members actively working to make a positive social impact on women and girls through football (ibid).

1.1 Context

Norway has for long been viewed as one of the leading countries in gender equality and policies (Hovden, 2010). The gender gap report of 2021 ranked Norway 3rd behind Iceland and Finland (World Economic Forum, 2021). Despite these facts, the lack of female participation in sports, especially in leading roles, has long been an issue (Fasting & Sand, 2017). Even though Norway is a winter sport-oriented country, football is the most popular sport for both males and females. According to The Norwegian Football Association (NFF), the number of active female and male players is 113.036 and 250.159. Even with such solid numbers, female representation in some roles in football is severely lacking (see appendix A for a complete summary). The table below presents the number of referees from 2015 until 2019 (Mangfoldskartlegging NFF, 2020a).

Table 1 Norwegian referees in numbers.

Year	Females	Males	Total	% females
2015	134	2665	2798	5%
2016	146	2781	2927	5%
2017	173	2813	2986	6%
2018	157	2717	2874	5%
2019	193	2878	2971	6%

As the table shows, females are severely underrepresented as referees, with only 193 out of 2971, even though this has been a crucial area of focus by the association for some time. In the previous strategy document from 2016-2019, the goal for the period was to increase the number of female referees by 100% (NFF, 2016b). NFF's referee department implemented several measures to achieve this goal, including female mentors, social meeting places, and a strong focus on female candidates in the development course Norway Centre of Refereeing Excellence (NORCORE). The development between 2016 and 2019 indicated that the measures have had some positive impact with a 34% increase in female referees. Despite the increment, the number of female referees varies massively from the different regional associations, with 0 to 40 referees (ibid). The focus on female football is also vital in NFF's current strategic plan for 2020-2023. The following statement can be found in the document:

“NFF wants to increase the number of girls and women both on and off the pitch. Therefore, we shall recruit, educate, and inspire more female players, coaches, referees, and leaders.”

In addition to continuing the previous measures, the goal is to create a referee development position in each regional association (Strategiplan NFF, 2020b).

Previous studies and research gap

Female leadership has since the mid-1980s been recognized as a compelling research field with numerous research projects (Defrantz, 1988; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Lovett & Lowry, 1988; Theberge, 1984). This trend continued into the 2000s, with multiple studies examining stereotypes (Burton et al., 2009; Hovden, 2010), perception of female leaders (Burton et al., 2011) and a review of research done on female leadership in sports (Burton, 2015), to mention a few.

According to Ridinger et al. (2017), the body of literature related to sports officials has experienced increased attention amongst sport researchers. However, the literature on football referees, specifically female football referees, are grossly underrepresented in studies (Pina et al., 2018). To underline Pina et al's argument, a quick search on Google scholar reveal that the search word "football" produces approximately 2.000.000 hits, "football player" 719.000, "football referee" 38.800, and "female football referee" 20.300 hits. To illustrate the research gap further, typing in Norwegian word for female referee "kvinnelig fotballdommer" produces only 46 hits! A more extensive review of literature on sporting referees and especially female referees are presented in the theory chapter.

Clarification of content

Sex and gender

The terms sex and gender have often, according to Lips (2020), been used interchangeably. However, after Unger's (1979) request, researchers and others have developed more precise definitions for the two terms. Sex refers to a person's biological affiliation, male or female, and gender, referring to cultural roles and behavioral expectations such as femininity and masculinity (Lips, 2020). The term gender is an overarching category that organizes social life, acts as an essential principle for self-identification, and helps us understand how society is structured (Järviluoma et al., 2003). Connell (2006) points out that gender is a term that defines male and females' position and a cultural negotiation of what it means to be a male and female. Nevertheless, the concept that gender is not limited to male and female categorization can help underline gender being a socially constructed phenomenon backed up by acceptance among members of a culture. In addition to the traditional male and female, "new" definitions are on the rise, such as genderfluid, genderqueer, and gender resistance (Lips, 2020).

Referee and Norwegian Football Association

Throughout this thesis, the terms referee and officials will be used interchangeably, the same for the verb refereeing and officiating. Likewise, the same applies when referring to the Norwegian Football Association, where *NFF*, *national association*, and *football association* are all used with the same meaning.

1.2 Research question

Developing a theme and research questions for a master thesis could be a challenging process. It needs to be engaging, relevant, and reasonably original. Thus far the introduction chapter have attempted to explain why the theme of this thesis is relevant and how it hopefully can contribute to narrow the existing research gap. As the main theme of the thesis is in place, the next big step is to choose between a hypothesis or a research question. According to Ringdal (2018), a hypothesis is a claim about reality, and a research question is more open-ended, and both vary in the degree of precision. Since the existing knowledge on Norwegian female referees is relatively narrow, the thesis has an exploratory approach. Therefore, the most logical choice would be research questions.

The following research questions were developed:

1. *What are the motivational factors for females to enter the referee role?*
2. *What have been the deciding factors for the female referees when determining to keep pursuing a career as a referee?*
3. *Do Norwegian female referees face challenges that they believe is linked to gender?*

1.3 The Norwegian Football Association

Founded 30th of April 1902, the Norwegian Football Association (NFF) is acting as the governing body of all organized football activities in Norway, both grassroots and elite. In addition, NFF has an association member of both UEFA and FIFA. NFFs vision is “Joy of Football, possibilities, and challenges for everyone.” (*“Fotballglede, muligheter og utfordringer for alle”*). NFF has its central headquarters with different departments located at Ullevaal Stadium. The primary responsibility is supervising and supporting the regional associations, administrating the top three flights of male leagues and top two flights of female leagues and all national teams.

In addition, NFF is divided into 18 regional associations (*kretser*), based on the geographical outlay of Norway, with their respective administration and staff members. Each said association has the administrative responsibility of developing clubs, league systems, and referee development within their region (Fotball.no, 2021).

The referee department

The referee department (*dommerseksjonen*), which has the overarching responsibility of all referee-related matters, is located within the competition department (*konkurransedelingen*) at NFF's headquarters. It is a small department with four full-time employees, three male, and one female. Their primary responsibilities are elite-referee management which includes contracts, match fixtures, evaluation, and development. In addition, they support the regional associations and manages the referee development tool NORCORE aimed at young talented referees.

1.4 The role of the football referee

In simple terms, the referee acts as the administrator of a football match, where their primary purpose is to make sure players and staff follow the laws of the game. The referee has the ultimate ruling power, hence their decisions on the pitch are final and cannot be changed. In low-level matches, the referee is alone on the pitch with some exceptions, where they have assistant referees. In higher-level matches in Norway, a referee has a team consisting of two assistant referees and a fourth referee who manages substitutions and talks to both teams on the sideline. After the match, referees get evaluated by a supervisor who grades their performance on a numeric grading scale. These grades are later used when the referee department considers potential candidates for promotion in the referee path pyramid and higher-level matches. The financial compensation for a referee varies depending on the level and role on the pitch, in the table below the financial compensation are presented. Furthermore, there are no restrictions for females to officiate in the elite male's league and for men to officiate in the elite women's league. The payment is also the same for both genders (Fotball.no, 2019)

Table 2 Financial compensation elite referees.

Level	Role	Compensation per match
Men's elite league		
	Main referee	€ 1.600
	Assistant referee	€ 1.000
	4 th referee	€ 400
1 st Division men		
	Main referee	€ 740
	Assistant referee	€ 360
	4 th referee	€ 125
Women's elite league		
	Main referee	€ 500
	Assistant referee	€ 140
	4 th referee	€ 78
1 st Division women		
	Main referee	€ 165
	Assistant referee	€ 98
	4 th referee	€ 78
Grassroots		
	Main referee	€ 19 - € 75

1.5 The referee path pyramid

The Norwegian referee path contains six steps towards becoming an elite referee. At the bottom of the path, the club referee is found. This is the first and most basic step in the referee education system. For this step, the local clubs have the main responsibilities for the education and certification of new referees. Club referees are officiating grassroot games ranging from five, seven, and eleven player matches. The second step, called recruitment referee, aims to educate referees further from the age of thirteen. Local football clubs and the regional association educate the referees and assign them to different matches. In addition, each referee receives feedback from a supervisor from the regional association. The third step in the referee path is the local regional association referee. The regional associations authorize recruitment referees, which qualifies them to officiate higher league-level football locally. The fourth step is aimed toward those referees who wish to specialize as *assistant referees* with the possibility of reaching FIFA level. The fifth step is the regional referee officiating in the 3rd division men.

The sixth step association referee officiates in the top flights *Elite league men*, 1st Division men, and *Elite league women*. The seventh and final step, FIFA referee, is only given to a few top referees, allowing them to officiate international games on different levels like Euro League, Champions League, and Euro and World cup qualifications (Dommerpyramiden, NFF, 2016a).

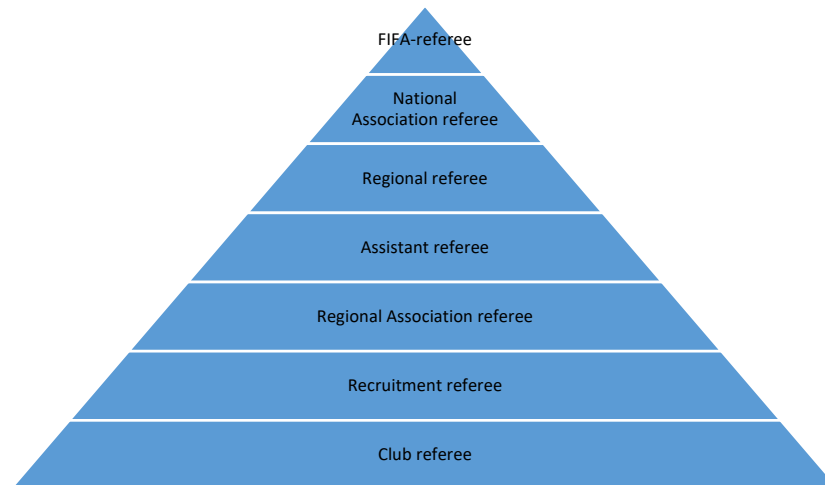


Figure 1 Referee path pyramid, (authors own translation from Norwegian.)

1.6 Female football in Norway

All the way back to 1887, before football had become masculine dominated, Laurentius Urdahl, a newspaper editor and a sports enthusiast, recommended that females participated in football and encouraged interested males to create football clubs for females. Despite Mr. Urdahl's encouragement, football quickly became a sport dominated by men that side-lined females into cleaning jerseys, admire and cheer for the male players (Goksøyr & Olstad, 2002). In 1911 an unknown author wrote that female interest in football was to watch the manliness unfold on the pitch. Female football in Norway was barely accepted as long as it was just unpretentious fun. Comical exhibition games, often male vs. female matches, were played throughout the 20s and the 30s with little progress for female football development.

According to Goksøyr and Olstad (2002) it took some 40 years before female football in Norway experienced some boost with a female match, which drew 5.000 spectators. In 1971, Oslo-based club Frigg and a local newspaper created an unofficial championship for women, and sixteen teams joined the first season. The effort did not go unnoticed as several other private leagues across Norway were created in the years following (Fasting, 2003).

Despite the growing popularity of female football, the Norwegian Football Association did not include them. On the contrary, the outside pressures for female football to be included were driven by the second wave of feminism in the 1970s. The pressures resulted in the Norwegian Council for Equal Rights founding, which acted as a governing body for equal rights for females in sports. In 1973 Norway cup allowed females to participate, which gave female football a boost. Additionally, the national newspaper *Dagbladet's* sports editor Leif Isdal wrote a critical article where he demanded that NFF should begin promoting female football instead of work against it. He also criticized NFF for being one of the last football associations in Europe to dismiss female football. In 1976 a women's committee for football development was established, two years later, a female national team was established together with an official championship, which was held annually (Fasting, 2003).

By 1980 the number of women's teams reached 305 and girl teams 362, and in the following years, several new leagues were created multiple places in Norway. Two essential milestones followed in the mid-1980s, with the implementation of the same league systems as the boys in 1984 and establishing a national league in 1987. In addition to developing female football leagues and teams, the committee was obligated to recruit and develop referees. In the first years, several females attended referee courses, and in 1988 the number of active female referees reached 200, but as Fasting (2003) stated, the referee to team ratio was less than 1 to 10. In the mid-1990s, more females got into different roles in football, such as Karen Espelund which became NFFs vice president in 1996 and later advanced to General secretary in 1999. However, it was not only in management females started to leave marks. In 1995 Bente Skogvang became the first Norwegian female referee to officiate in a women's world cup. In the 1996 Olympics, Skogvang was elected to officiate the finale, making her a true pioneer for Norwegian referees (ibid).

1.7 Structure of the thesis

The thesis structure is presented below:

The second chapter will examine past studies on sporting referees, then focus on football referees, and finally female referees. The second section covers theoretical concepts that are related to the results in the discussion chapter.

Chapter three presents the methodology used for this project through a critical lens, where both advantages and disadvantages of the choices are reviewed. Further, the whole process is explained, from developing a research design to the interview process to the data analysis. Finally, at the end of the chapter, validity, reliability, and ethics are discussed.

Chapter four presents the findings of this study. The results are organized into what is believed to be relevant to the research questions. Data in each of the sections are divided into related themes done in the analysis process.

Chapter five presents the discussion part where the findings and the previous literature and theory are connected to explain and understand the different findings.

Chapter six, the final chapter, presents a conclusion drawn from the discussion part. It also reflects upon the implication and limitations of the study and suggestions for further research.

2.0 Theory

This chapter is divided into two main parts, literature review and theory, both related to the research questions. The theory part of this chapter covers central theories and frameworks that will be used later in the discussion chapter of this thesis.

2.1 Literature review

As outlined in the introduction there have been several studies on female leaders in sports (Burton, 2015; Defrantz, 1988; Hovden, 2010), and some studies also look at female sporting referees (Forbes et al., 2015; Nordstrom et al., 2016; Reid & Dallaire, 2020). However, research specifically on female football referees is limited. This literature review aims to give an overview of existing research on sporting referees in different sports, then narrowing down to football referee related studies, and finally down to female referees. Due to the limited studies on female football referees this section includes studies from other relatable team sports, in example, American football and basketball. It is important to notice that the majority of the research done on sporting officials in this review originates from western society mainly North America, and some could be outdated due to time of the study. Only one of the studies done on football referees have a Norwegian context (Johansen, 2015), which underline the previous mentioned research gap.

Sporting referees

As mentioned in the introduction chapter, the primary role of a referee is to make sure actors in a match are sticking to the laws of the game. It is, therefore, fair to say that roles of the referee across team sports like football, basketball, and ice hockey are likely to be somewhat similar to a certain extent.

In the early 1980s, researchers Fry and Sefton (1982) published a study called "Retention of game officials for ice hockey" the study aimed to identify motivational factors for becoming an ice hockey referee and the reasons for leaving the role in Canada. Results indicated that 54% did it due to love for the sport, 44% to serve the community, and 42% did it for personal pleasure. Further, cogent reasons for leaving the role were lack of time (32%) and continual criticism from other stakeholders (20%).

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, David M. Furst argued that the socialization process into the officiation role was mostly neglected compared to other roles in sports. Through Furst's study (1989, 1991), a survey was sent out to approximately 118 male and female referees across volleyball, basketball, and softball in the Midwest region in the US. The study's main aim was to map out demographical data and the factors influencing the initial involvement in the officiating role. The findings of this study showed that most of the referees were in their late 30s, facing the end of their playing career. Factors that lead them into the officiating role were their interests and enthusiasm for their sport, the act of challenging themselves, and the feeling of justice and fair play. In addition, former coaches, officials, and their peers were mentioned, besides their families, as critical influencing factors that lead them into the officiation role.

Some years before Furst (1989, 1991), Purdy and Snyder (1985) investigated the social profile of high school basketball officials in the state of Ohio US with data from 689 participants. The findings revealed that the typical referee was male, married, under the age of 40, and well educated. Data from the study indicated that in most cases, individuals were socialized into the officiating role through friends and other closely related persons that were already involved in officiating. When asked for reasons for starting and continuing officiating, the respondents had four main contributors, interest and enthusiasm for their sport, the challenge and excitement, extra money, and the feeling of power and control when officiating games.

Much later, Auger et al. (2010) replicated the study done by Fry and Sefton (1982) but included officials from 16 selected sports associations in Québec, Canada. Some of the sports included in this study were football, basketball, ice hockey, and baseball. The results mainly aligned with Fry and Sefton's findings with the three main reasons for becoming an official as: love for the sport, leisure activity, and personal development and satisfaction. Reasons for leaving the officiating role were also similar, with lack of time, recognition, low salary and respect as the main contributors.

A popular field within the official research is stress and its relationship connected with burnout and the intention of quitting as a referee. Taylor et al. (1990) investigated the role between burnout, stress, and dropout amongst football officials during an entire season. 529 officials responded first three months into the season, then four months after the initial survey. The main findings showed that fear of failure, role conflict, and interpersonal conflict had an indirect influence on the intention of quitting for the referees. The conclusion in this study suggested

that the total perceived stress and burnout only had indirect effects on the intention of quitting amongst the referees (ibid).

Other studies on stress amongst sports officials with similar results have been conducted. For example, Goldsmith and Williams (1992) looked at perceived stressors amongst American football and volleyball officials, Rainey (1995, 1999) investigated sources of stress and intention of quitting among officials in softball and baseball. Rainey and Hardy (1999) did the same. However, this time with rugby union referees and Burk (2000) used data from college and high school basketball officials to investigate perceptions of anxiety prior, under, and after games.

Football referees

In an attempt to get an overview of existing research on football referees, Pina et al. (2018) did an integrative review of existing football refereeing literature. By using the search words "Football referee," "Soccer referee," and "Football Association referee," the researchers found 267 full-text articles that they grouped into different themes and sub-themes based on the research problem of the articles. The result was seven themes; 1. *Physical performance* 2. *Technical performance* 3. *Psychology* 4. *Organization* 5. *Injuries* 6. *Physiology* 7. *Development models*. In addition, the researchers created 54 sub-themes under the seven main themes. The key findings in this review showed that 61% of all the literature in the study revolves around the referees' physical and technical performance. The most popular sub-themes under these two themes were *match, decision making, bias, and physiology*. After categorizing every article into themes and sub-themes, Pina et al. (2018) then identified which referee role, level, and gender was focused on in the 267 articles. In 227 (85%) of all the articles, the sole focus was male referees, while 66 of the articles (24%) had the male assistant referee in focus. From the female perspective, only 32 (12%) of the articles include female referees, and 7 of the studies (2%) include female assistant referees in their samples. Even though female participants were included in the data, conclusions in the majority of these research projects were not drawn upon gender.

Some studies that were not included in the integrative review (ibid) were Wolfson and Neave's (2007) research where they investigated the cognitive strategies for maintaining confidence among experienced British football referees. The study included a four-page questionnaire answered by 42 referees. Results showed that 71% of the referees felt physically drained after matches. Despite this, all the respondents said that the referee duty was worth pursuing. The

study also identified several mechanisms to cope with the negative feedback from players, coaches, spectators, and others. One of the coping strategies frequently used was to turn a misjudgment of a call into an opportunity to improve. They also used available support systems and fellow referees, but surprisingly, many referees perceived themselves as superior to fellow referee colleagues. The conclusion in this study portrayed the average football referee as a confident, resilient individual who uses errors to improve themselves further (ibid).

Friman et al. (2015) did a study on threats and aggression directed at football referees in Sweden. Besides the main aim for this study, the researchers managed to identify motivational factors for going into and staying in the role as a football referee. The findings suggest that a strong interest for football, meeting people, and the opportunity for traveling were strong influencers, in addition to positive attention and respect. Folkesson et al. (2002) concluded that referees with a generally positive orientation experienced more motivation, better performance and less problem coping with aggressive behaviors for players and spectators than their more negative oriented peers. In his doctoral dissertation Ortega (2013) argues that the intrinsic motivations such as personal satisfaction, and development were the most important reason for officiating football, and that the extrinsic motivations like financial gain, had the least importance. Much in line with previous studies mentioned in this literature review.

The Norwegian researcher Bjørn Tore Johansen (2015) examined the reasons why individuals chose to become football referees in Norway. The total of 83 elite referees and forty-four amateur referees answered a web-based questionnaire with open-ended questions, asking for the three main reasons or motivations for going into the role as a referee. The feedback from the respondents were separated into two samples, elite and amateur and then organized into categories based on the theme of the responses. In sample 1, the elite referees, the three main reasons for officiating football were, passion-based reasons 57% (such as, love for the sport, enjoyment, and excitement), social reasons 25% (meeting people, stay in the football family, and member of the officiating team.), and fitness-based reasons 13% (physical activity, body appearance, and staying fit). Other less frequent reasons were leadership- 2,8%, decision-making 2%, and economic-related reasons 0,4%. (ibid) In sample 2, the amateurs, the three top reasons for officiating football were, passion-based 25%, social reasons 25%, and fitness-based reasons 13%. Other less frequent reasons were leadership- 5,3%, decision-making 5,3%, and economic-related reasons 8,4%. The conclusion was that passion-based motivation was significantly higher among the elite referees than the amateurs, the author explained this reason

as “that the elite referees have internalized officiating soccer in an autonomous fashion” (p.26) Adding that the elite referees most likely have become a part of a broad social environment and learned through experience to cope with social pressures. The results also showed that elite referees were more likely to be intrinsically motivated than their amateur colleagues.

Female referees

Referring to the integrated review above (Pina et al. 2018), only five of the studies included in the review had female referees as the primary focus. Bizzini et al. (2009) investigated injuries and musculoskeletal problems amongst female referees selected for the Women's World cup in 2007. The second study was presented by Keller et al. (2013), which examined the pre-competition medical assessment in both female referees and assistant referees before the Women's World cup in 2011. The third study was done by Mallo et al. (2010), where the match activity, more specifically the relation to the offside line amongst elite female assistant referees, in the Woman's World cup 2006 was examined. The two last studies with female-only samples were done outside major international tournaments, Lex et al. (2015) examine the influence of players' vocalizations on soccer referees' decisions among German referees across multiple levels, including male leagues.

The last study with the provoking title "Women can't referee" by researchers Forbes, Edwards, and Fleming (2015) explored the experience of female referees officiating male amateur football matches in the counties of Warwickshire and Somerset in the UK. The methodological approach of the study where in-depth semi-structured interviews with four female referees aged between 16 and 33, with official experience ranging from two to seven years. The results of the study demonstrated that much of the harassment that female referees experienced could be linked to the culture of harassment towards referees in general. On top of that, female referees have to deal with sexist harassment often based on gender stereotypes. Often did they experience that their ability as a football referee was questioned even before entering the pitch. Such gender stereotypes towards female referees were enforced by players, coaches, and spectators through comments like "female can't ref" when making an incorrect decision. The even more concerning results of the study were that the female referees downplayed and ignored the sexist harassment from players, managers, and spectators by accepting the gender stereotypes as just a normal part of the game of football (ibid).

A similar study by Nordstrom et al. (2016) that focused on work-related experiences with female American football officials found some of the same experiences as Forbes, Edwards, and Fleming (2015). The study's main aim was to gain a holistic perspective of women's experience officiating in a male-dominated sport. As a guideline, two research questions were made, *what are the experiences of female football officials within the masculine football culture?* and *what is the workplace atmosphere within the football officiating community for female officials?* By interviewing eight active officials with at least three years' experience at high school or college level, four themes, gendered experiences, sense of community, mentoring, and passion for officiating and football were extracted from the codes and data. Findings showed that the participants experienced what the authors called "gender experience," which included challenges, resistance, and stereotyping because they were female officials. The gender experience was confirmed by all participants but was said to be subtle, thus not pushing the female officials out of the role. The three other themes were believed to be strong contributors to the experience; the sense of community was profound to their official experience and created a fellowship of officials. This sense of community was essential for the success of the participants. Mentoring also played a vital role in the experience. All the participants had a mentor, which contributed to their development as an official. The last theme showed that passion for the sport was strong amongst the officials in the study and showed that the role as an official is more than just a job. The study highlights that these findings could help sports administrators better understand the mechanisms and contributors to the female official experience and use this to better recruit and develop more female officials into their sport (ibid).

In the article "I'd like to think I'm a good referee" by Reid and Dallaie (2020), the experience of female football referees in Canada is explored. The study included fifteen referees aged from 21 to 54 and the experience time as a referee between two and 22 years, and from grassroots to elite. Their experiences were categorized into four themes: first experience, recognition, validation, being good, and ability proving. The first experience showed different paths into the referee role; some started young, others after their playing career was over, and some began due to family and friends. Recognition and validation from sports leaders, fellow referees, players, and spectators acted as a decisive motivational factor for continuing refereeing. Especially validation for males seemed to be particularly important. The researchers believed this phenomenon exists because most sports leaders and other significant stakeholders tend to be male, and hence, their opinion is of more value. Many of the officials in this study viewed

themselves as good referees and believed in their abilities. Some participants said that recognition as a good referee from others worked as a sign to start climbing the ranks and seek more demanding challenges. Even though the participants saw themselves as good referees, the constant battle to prove their abilities as a referee was present, the pressure to prove that the stereotype of female referees as incompetent did not apply to them and that they could keep up with their male counterparts. Reid and Dallaire's (2020) study concluded that the participants in the study were required to set aside their gender as a woman but instead act as a good referee. By doing so, they indirectly accepted that the abilities in officiating were of masculine traits and therefore reproduced the gender norms. The study participants did not focus much on gender before specific questions on the matter.

The main focus in this section of the literature review have so far been reasons for beginning officiating, and the female's experiences being a referee. The next two articles by Kim and Hong (2016) and Tingle et al. (2014) explores reasons for leaving the officiating role among former female referees. Kim and Hong's study is from a South Korean perspective, with 6 former football referees as their data source. Semi-structured interviews were adapted as the method, with the criteria of being at least at level two official, which mean that the participant had minimum officiated twenty games over a period of two years before quitting. The main findings identified negative attitudes towards female referees, lack of mentoring systems and support, and a weak female culture and community. The conclusion of the study pointed out the need for improved administrative strategies for empowerment and enhancement of female officials as a step towards overcome inequality in Korean football. The main weakness in this study is the small sample size with only four participants, which makes generalization an issue.

The second article by Tingle et al. (2014) examines referees' reasons for, using American basketball officials as their data source. The method used were semi-structured interviews of eight former basketball officials on a high school and college level. The snowball method was used to recruit participants, and the main criteria was that you were not an active referee at the time. In total the participants originated from five states in the US, with two to seventeen years of experience, and average age of 37. Many had also previous experience form officiating other sports primary football. The findings have many of the same features as the one above, with lack of respect from male colleagues, inequity in governing policies, and lack of role models and mentoring programs as their main reasons for leaving the officiating role. The conclusion pointed out the need for stronger officiating communities support, a culture change where

inclusion is more valued, and more extensive diversity training. As many of the studies, the number of participants is low compared to the total population which inhibits the generalization of the results found.

2.2 Theory and frameworks

The second part of this chapter presents theories and frameworks, which will contribute to understanding and reflecting upon the results chapter's findings. The section will first present the Referee retention scale, role models, and the trickle-down effect, which is mainly used to discuss the two first research questions. Furthermore, the multi-level framework, social role, gender stereotype, and stereotype threat theory are presented to discuss the third research question.

2.2.1 Referee Retention Scale

The referee retention scale (RRC) will be used as a framework during the discussion to explain the participants' findings on motivation and retention. It will also give a solid base to enable the findings to be compared with previous research, especially to see if female referees in Norway have different motivational factors than colleagues from other countries. The referee retention scale (L. Ridinger et al., 2017) is developed based on previous research on the sport officiating topic to predict sports officials' job satisfaction and intention to pursue an officiation career based on a seven-factor scale. In addition to the psychological aspects regarding the officiating role, the RRC includes organizational and sociological issues in all stages of the referee's career, such as recruitment, retention, and advancement.

The RRC consists of seven factors contributing to motivation to start and continue in the referee role. *Administrative consideration* covers the fairness of the administrative procedures of assigning matches and the administrators' abilities to consider individual needs.

Intrinsic motives include the experience of staying in the game and enjoyment of challenges.

Mentoring refers to the support and encouragement from essential persons like friends, family, or mentors. *Remuneration* covers the financial benefits of the referee role, while the *Sense of community* includes the individuals' perceived belonging and support from a group. *Lack of stress* refers to limited encounters with stressful situations related to the referee role. Finally,

continuing education which relates to the continuing development through education and training offered to the referees.

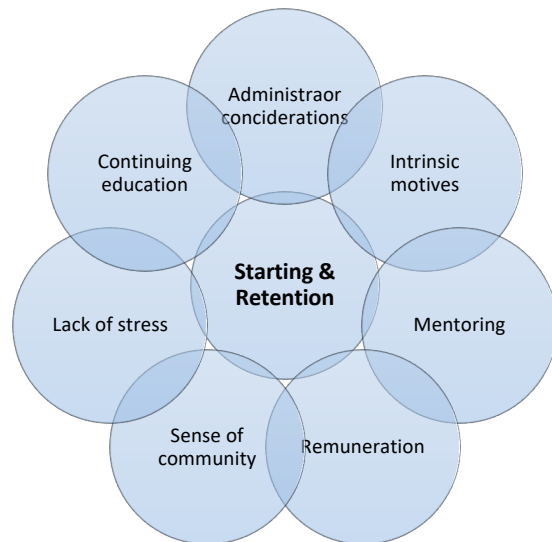


Figure 2 Referee retention scale

2.2.2 Role model and the trickle-down effect

The term role model is generally accepted as a person to whom other are looking up to. Lockwood (2006, p. 36) defines role models as; "individuals who provide an example of the kind of success that one may achieve, and often also provide a template of the behaviors that are needed to achieve success." Besides the success, the literature identifies two other characteristics, the worthiness of imitation and similarity. The worthiness refers to the role model as exhibiting a good reputation and character, and similarity refers to the extent that individuals believe in having some of the same attributes as their role model. The role model concept does not only apply to football players by also to referees. The perceived success of a referee can be based on the level of officiating, and the similarities can be in age or gender and therefore make them worthy of imitation.

Trickle-down effect

As role models may play an important role in motivating and influencing youth to participate in sports, understanding the mechanisms of role models is essential. According to (Wicker & Frick, 2016), the trickle-down effect is a consequence of role models in sports, and to understand it is required to understand the structure of the sport system. The sporting system is built on a pyramid structure where the grassroots sport is placed at the bottom and feeds the other levels with athletes, all the way to the top where a few elite athletes are found. The general idea is that a few will eventually climb the steps and become elite athletes from a large athlete pool at the grassroots level. The transformation from grassroots to elite level is called *the trickle-up effect* (ibid). The Football Association has long used the pyramid system in their recruitment strategy, including referees, as presented in the introduction chapter. The trickle-down effect, or demonstration- (Weed et al., 2015) and Boris Becker effect (Van Bottenburg, 2001) , assume that elite athletes have an inspirational effect and therefore positively influence the number of grassroots athletes. The trickle-down effect consists of sporting success, elite athletes as role models, and hosting sporting events. Further, the trickle-down effect influences athletes in two ways, inspirational and motivational. The inspirational effect refers to influencing people to start a sport, while the motivational effect is the influential factor in increasing the active athletes' activity (Wicker & Frick, 2016).

2.2.3 Multi-level framework

The multi-level framework was initially developed to understand the underrepresentation of women in sport leadership through three levels of sporting context, macro, meso, and micro-level (Burton, 2015). However, leadership in sport has a broad meaning, and it is considered in this thesis the referee role as a leadership position. Therefore, the multi-level framework could better categorize and understand the challenges found in the results chapter in the discussion section.

The *macro-level examines factors on an institutional level*. Burton refers to influencing factors for the scarcity of women in leading positions as gendered institutional logics and processes that operate within a hegemonic masculine norm in which sport operates. Shaw and Frisby (2006) and Cunningham (2008) underline this by arguing that sports organizations have adopted masculinity as an institutional logic as an operating principle. Furthermore, this will reinforce masculinity as the appropriate leadership trait for sporting leaders. As a result, gender

inequality becomes a part of the institutionalized logic within sport organizations. Within the macro-level several influencing factors fuels the absence of female leaders, such as organizational demography, hegemonic masculinity, the influence of power, stakeholder influence, and institutionalized discrimination.

The *Meso-level* examines factors on an organizational level. The influencing factors include "stereotyping of leaders, issues of discrimination, and gendered organizational cultures." (Burton, 2015, p. 1).

Other influencing factors are organizational operations which include structure, governance, and policies within the organization. For example, access and treatment discrimination excludes specific groups from the organization or receives fewer resources yet legitimately entitled.

The *micro-level* investigates causes on an individual level, focusing on how people make meaning of their experience, expectations, and understanding of power and policies Burton (2015, p. 7). The Micro-level also includes assumptions made by the individual, self-limiting behaviors, and human and social capital.

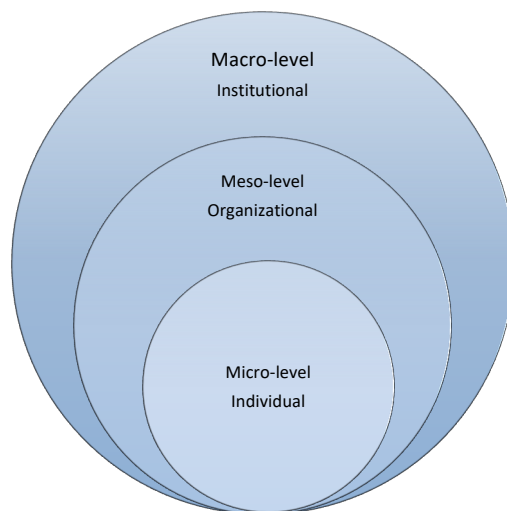


Figure 1. The multi-level framework

2.2.4 Role theory

The role theory will be used to understand and explain the challenges connected to gender and the referee role. According to (Gibson & Pennington-Gray, 2005), role theory is one of the oldest theories used to understand society. The word role originates from the theatre and refers to "the characterization that an actor was called upon to enact in the context of a given dramatic presentation" (G. Shaw & Costanzo, 1982, p. 296). Gibson and Pennington-Gray (2005, p. 445) utilize the term role as a "collection of behaviors that are influenced by the interaction of agency and structure." Role theory can further be divided into two main perspectives, functional-, and symbolic roles. The functional role theory is considered a set of behaviors associated with a social position. Social norms and expectations mostly dictate these behaviors. Therefore, the individual taking on the role must conform to them and play a role rather than actively shaping it in any way. In contrast, the symbolic look at role making through interactions with others in a social context. Even though social norms and behaviors influence the symbolic approach, the individuals have a more central part in shaping the role (ibid).

Social role and Role congruity theory

Social role theory is one of many sub-themes based on role theory, which argues that behavioral differences between the sexes arise due to differences in the social roles of women and men, especially those related to the division of labor (Eagly et al., 2000). For example, men historically tended to do work where strength and speed were required, while women tended to work at home with child-caring tasks. Thus, due to these gender roles, expectations of men as masculine and women as feminine have been reproduced throughout history. Moreover, the gender roles have been sustained with descriptive and injunctive social norms (Harrison & Lynch, 2005). A descriptive norm refers to how an individual recognizes how other people act or behaves in a similar situation to determine how to act. In contrast, injunctive social norms are the expectations towards how people should act or behave. These norms are working simultaneously to preserve the traditional gender roles because differing from these norms would most likely lead to social condemnation (ibid).

Role congruity theory builds on social role theory by examining the compatibility between gender roles and leadership roles (Joseph & Anderson, 2016). For example, if gender roles are

applied to men and women, some positions are deemed more suited for a specific gender, such as nursing is appropriate for females and construction work for males. Thus, resulting in stereotyping of females, especially in masculine-dominated fields, because of the perceived mismatch between the expectations of females through the gender role and the leadership role (Burton et al., 2011; Eagly & Karau, 2002). Moreover, this leads to females being less desirable as leaders, and when evaluating behavior that complies with leadership role norms, it is less advantageous when performed by a woman. The outcome is that people tend to have a more positive attitude toward male leaders than female leaders, making it more difficult for females to become leaders (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

2.2.5 Gender stereotypes and stereotype threat

According to Heilman (2012, p. 113), “stereotypes are generalizations about groups that are applied to individual group members simply because they belong to that group, and gender stereotypes are generalizations about the attributes of men and women”

Within the gender stereotypes, researchers have identified two different properties, descriptive and prescriptive. Descriptive gender stereotypes refer to how the genders are like or how they act. Examples: females are emotional, or males are aggressive. It also creates negative expectations of females’ performance through what is a perceived mismatch between the attributes needed to succeed in what is viewed as a typical male position and the attributes of the females (Heilman, 2001).

Prescriptive gender stereotypes refer to how the group members should act to avoid contempt from others. Examples; Females should be emotional and caring, and males should be strong and hide emotions (Gill, 2004; Heilman, 2012). This could lead to the establishment of normative expectations for both male and female behavior, which results in disrespect and lack of value for female traits (Heilman, 2001). As a result, the two types of stereotypes and the expectations they create could potentially hurt women’s career choices and progress.

Stereotype threat is a term used to describe a situation where a negative stereotype about a social group in which an individual belongs and is therefore concerned about being judged or treated negatively due to the stereotyping of the social group. Stereotype threat could also affect the performance of an individual if negative stereotypes regarding their groups' performance pressure them (Hively & El-Alayli, 2014; Spencer et al., 2016).

There have been multiple studies on stereotype threat, academic setting (Carr & Steele, 2010; Huguet & Régner, 2007) testing settings (Schmader et al., 2015), performance settings (Stone et al., 1999; Yeung & von Hippel, 2008). An example of the last study, women participating were reminded that women are "bad drivers" before performing a driver simulation. Results showed that participants who were reminded about the stereotype hit twice as many jaywalkers as those who were not exposed to the stereotype. Thus, getting reminded about stereotypes linked to the individual's gender significantly reduces the performance of the task (Yeung & von Hippel, 2008). This effect is what the researchers call the stereotype threat effect.

The literature and theories presented are considered to have relevance for the research questions. Previous literature could generalize some of the findings and discover potential patterns of referee retention and motivations. Numerous theories could help understand the topic, but only a few specific theories were included to prevent the discussion from drowning in too many theories. In the following chapter, the chosen methodology in this study will be presented.

3.0 Methodology

"The aim, as far as I can see, is the same in all sciences. Put simply and cursorily, the aim is to make known something previously unknown to human beings. It is to advance human knowledge, to make it more certain or better fitting... the aims is... discovery"
Elias (1986 p.20)

This chapter aims to examine the methodology used in this study by evaluating the strength and weaknesses of the choices made and critically assess the data collection and analysis. The process will be explained in detail and backed up by relevant theory. The final part of the chapter will discuss the thesis's reliability, validity, and ethical aspects. Before exploring the chapter further, the research questions are restated:

1. *What are the motivational factors for females to enter the referee role?*
2. *What have been the deciding factors for the female referees when determining to keep pursuing a career as a referee?*
3. *Do Norwegian female referees face challenges that they believe is linked to gender?*

After establishing the research topic and developing research questions, the next step is to find the most suitable research design for the project (Veal & Darcy, 2014). According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019), the research design acts like a general plan that dictates how the researcher will answer the research question. Thus, which source the data is collected from, how it is collected and analyzed. As the literature review identified, there is a research gap regarding research on female referees and especially in a Norwegian setting; the purpose of this study is to gather an extensive and detailed amount of information from a few sources rather than limited data from a significant number of sources. Therefore, the choice of method design felt on qualitative research.

Furthermore, arguing that this approach is built upon that people are personally involved in a specific situation is best suited to describe and explain their experience, motivation, and worldview in their own words without being restrained by the research framework (Veal and

Darcy (2014, p.252). This aligns well with this paper's aim, trying to gain insights into elite female referees' experiences in Norway and answering the three research questions. Allowing the participants to talk about the topic freely could lead to a more natural and interactive process than a quantitative approach (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2019). However, no research method is perfect, and it is necessary to recognize the deficiencies of the adopted method, which includes the inability to generalize statistical data and understand reflective trends. This weakness is rooted in the fact that the samples used are seldom representative and the number of resources needed to include a larger sample (Tjora, 2017).

Since female referees in Norway are an unexplored topic, primary open-ended questions are being used during the interviews, following the principles of exploratory research. Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019) state that an exploratory design is valuable when asking open questions where the primary purpose is to discover and gaining insights into a specific topic.

3.1 Sample

According to Veal and Darcy (2014), there are different qualitative sampling methods; since the research question of this thesis is based on two criteria female and elite referees, it is a relatively straightforward process with a limited population. Throughout the two top flights of Norwegian female football, there are 27 referees and assistant referees, 21 in Toppserien and 6 in the first division (NFF, 2021). Although it would have made an excellent database, interviewing all 27 referees would have consumed too much time and resources. A possible approach could have been to use a mix of both qualitative and quantitative methods, where a questionnaire based on the qualitative research findings was sent out to all the female elite referees.

The process started with sending out a standardized email to all the 27 top female referees in Norway using NFF's database, where all the email addresses are kept. The email contained a short presentation of the researcher and the research project, attached with a formal letter containing in-depth information about the research project and the legal aspects of working with personal information. The letter also stated that participating in this study was voluntary and that participants could withdraw from the project at any time without reason (Annex C).

Although the researcher was affiliated with the referee department through a student internship, it was essential to highlight that the association had no official role in the project besides using

the findings in the further development of female referees. There was also no encouragement to participate from the referee department directed towards the referees. However, it could create subconscious pressure for the referees to participate since they are on NFFs payroll and therefore feel obligated to participate.

Another concern is that when answering the questions, the participants could falsely assign positive aspects of NFF or others to prevent criticizing their employer and coworkers. This phenomenon is more likely to happen if the participants are easily identified since the population is limited in numbers. It was therefore vital that the participant's identity was protected as much as possible. For that reason, the names, exact age, and experience are not revealed and replaced with a more general description like early twenties and 5+ years of experience. The downside of this method is that some of the findings could potentially lose meaning when studying age as a factor for a particular phenomenon. However, confidently a less specific age range would limit the problem.

The strategy for selecting participants was to wait for the referees to respond to the inquiry, then pick participants with as much diversity as possible based on age and experience. Several referees volunteered to participate as some time went by, and after a week or two, the number reached six. Since the variety of the participants, age and experience were satisfactory; no further action was taken to recruit more referees. However, the invitation remained active in case some of the participants withdrew from the study.

3.2 Participants

As stated, six elite female referees participated in this study. The age ranged from the early twenties to mid-thirties. They have a combined experience in officiating football of over 50 years, both male and females from grassroots to Women's elite league (*Toppserien*), 1st Division women (*1 Divisjon Kvinner*), 1st Division men (*OBOS-Ligaen*), and 3rd division men (*Norsk-tipping ligaen*). All the respondents had played football but gradually turned their primary focus to officiating as they advanced as a referee. Note that 50% of the total 1. Division women referees and 14% of all the Women's elite league referees are represented in this study.

Table 3 Participants

	Age	Experience	Current level
Participant 1	Early twenties	5+	1.Div. Female
Participant 2	Mid-twenties	10+	Women's elite league
Participant 3	Mid-twenties	8+	1.Div. Female
Participant 4	Early twenties	8+	1.Div. Female
Participant 5	Thirties	10+	Women's elite league
Participant 6	Thirties	15+	Women's elite league

3.3 Interview guide

Since the in-depth and semi-structured interviews became the choice of method, the interview guide acted as a general guideline or checklist for the interviews of the participants (Veal and Darcy, 2014). According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019), a semi-structured interview guide contains a predetermined list of themes with key questions related to the different themes. The guide helps the interviewer keep track of the main themes throughout the interviews but allows the respondent to speak freely without restraining the subject. Several previous studies inspired the questions (Forbes et al., 2015; Friman et al., 2015; Johansen, 2015; Nordstrom et al., 2016; L. Ridinger et al., 2017; Wolfson & Neave, 2007) and since the study aimed to explore the participants' experience, the questions needed to be as open as possible without leading them into specific themes found in previous studies.

The interview guide was divided into three main parts with different themes. Under each theme, there were multiply additional questions asked if it felt natural to the topic of conversation. Particular themes were based on existing theory and are, therefore, according to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019), deductive collection of data and the need for the distinct theme to be used consistently throughout all interviews (Appendix B).

3.4 Interview process

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic at the time of the research project, the only suitable choice of conducting the interviews was through online interviews by face-to-face video calls like Zoom or Teams or with a phone call. According to Tjora (2017), phone interviews should be avoided in qualitative research because one loses the ability to use and interpret body language, like nodding to encourage the interview subject to continue a good line of thought or using gestures to underline an important point. Despite conducting the interviews through Teams which allows the interviewer to observe the tone of voice and facial expressions, complete body language like hand gestures is difficult to observe through a screen. Another challenge with the interviews is that the interviewer does not have control over the subject's environment, such as the presence of other individuals in the room with the subject, which according to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019), could influence the interviewees' willingness to share sensitive data.

As the referees volunteered to participate, they received a new email containing appreciation for their willingness to contribute to the research project. In addition, the project information was restated, emphasizing the possibility to withdraw at any time without reason and that their identity would not be revealed in the thesis. Finally, the volunteers were asked to suggest a date and time for the interview and if they were comfortable conducting it through Teams. Attached to the email was an information letter from NSD where additional information regarding the project, with contact information of the researcher and the schools' supervisor. The participants were also asked to sign a consent form, as required by the NSD. Since the interviewer had no previous experience conducting in-depth interviews, a test interview with a fellow student was conducted. By having some prior experience, the confidence was a little higher before facing the actual subjects.

Before starting each interview, the said information was restated, and the interviewer asked for consent to record the interviews through a recorder. Since the appearance and behavior of the interviewer can affect the subjects (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2019), the interviewer made sure to look presentable and avoid using clothing with NFFs logo to prevent any role confusion. Before asking the first question, small talk with the subject was initiated to create a relaxing and trusting setting for both interviewer and interviewee. The interview guide acted as a road map to ensure that every theme was covered during the interviews. Throughout the interviews, questions were not always asked in the same order or asked at all since some of the

subjects covered them in their reasonings. When listening to the subjects, the interviewer made sure to use interview responses (Whyte, 1982) such as signs like a nod, an "uh-huh," or "that is interesting" to keep encouraging the interviewee. Since all the subjects and the interviewer have Norwegian as their mother tongue, the interviews were conducted in Norwegian. It was believed that using Norwegian would make the participants more comfortable and contribute to a better flow since using a second language could limit the subjects' abilities to articulate their thoughts and prevent communication problems. After some interviews, there were already several recurring answers, which could indicate that six participants were a sufficient number. Each of the interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and were conducted in the period of 16th and 28th of April.

3.5 Data analysis

After each interview, the recording got a listen-through while taking notes of potential themes and interesting points. When all interviews were done and notes were taken, the sound recordings were transcribed. The transcription process started with an automatic service through Word from Microsoft office. However, since the program has some struggles with the language and sound quality of the recordings varying, a manual look-through with additional editing is vital to secure the quality of the data. Finally, the data analysis was done through thematic analysis. This is a fundamental method of analyzing qualitative data. Researchers look for general themes across the dataset by coding the text, categorized them into sub-themes and later general themes (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2019).

To illustrate the process quotes such as; *"As a youth, the money was a strong motivational factor...."* and *«In the beginning, I did it because of the money...."* created the theme "Financial motivation." The themes created in the analysis were not predetermined and were developed based on the data. Since the coding process tends to be challenging and time-consuming, an Excel worksheet was used to keep the process as structured as possible. At the end of the analysis, several themes were established accordingly to the belonging section of the results. The analysis process was done with the original text, hence in Norwegian, the disadvantage of choosing to conduct and analyze the data this way is the challenge to precisely translate the data into English.

Working with the translation of interview data raises several challenges such as, translating the text literally or not. For example, if the researcher gets a clear answer in incoherent sentences, it may be easier to translate word for word, although individual words can cause problems.

However, if the respondent's sentence structure is complex and the response is highly coded, the translation tends to overgeneralize by nature (Filep, 2009). To prevent the said problems from being too prominent, the data coding happened before translating the text to ensure that the themes and codes were as precise as possible. It was not until the structure of the results chapter was complete before translating the quotes into English. Some of the English quotes would most likely sound a bit wordy to an expert English reader. However, perfect English language was not a priority since the objective was to capture the meaning as close to the respondent's original quotes as possible.

3.6 Validity and reliability

The quality of a research project and the trust put in the process is based on the method used and how the researcher deployed it. To measure the said elements, two dimensions, validity and reliability, are often used (Slack, 2020; Veal & Darcy, 2014).

Validity

According to Veal and Darcy (2014), validity is:

"the extent to which the information presented in the research truly reflects the phenomena which the researcher claims it reflects" (p 49). Validity can further be divided into two domains, *internal* and *external*.

Internal validity

Referring to the consistency and accuracy of the relationship between the data and conclusions based on the data. Suppose the degree of internal validity is high. In that case, the researcher is confident that the cause-effect drawn from the data is not caused by other factors or variables not examined (Veal and Darcy, 2014; Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2019).

External validity

Referring to the generalization of the study, in which the findings in one study could apply to other relevant settings (Veal and Darcy, 2014).

Since the nature of quantitative research seldom provides the possibilities to generalize the findings, external validity makes it challenging to draw a general conclusion based on the

results in this thesis and due to the specific cultural setting, which may differ from other cultures globally.

However, there are responses to the generalization problem by analyzing the results against the existing theory; If successful, the findings could demonstrate its broader theoretical significance (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2019).

Reliability

Reliability refers to the trustworthiness of the study. For example, the original study would be deemed reliable if different researchers used the same research design and achieved the same results. According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019), *potential reliability threats are participant error/bias and research error/bias*.

Since this study and its findings are closely linked to Norwegian culture and gender equality, the same study conducted in other countries with different cultures and gender equality would most likely produce different results. If the study were to be conducted in the near future in Norway, the results would probably be the same or similar. Due to the fast-changing pace of the sports industry, how it is governed, and societal factors, the study could most likely produce a different result if replicated in five or ten years (Veal and Darcy, 2014).

3.7 Ethics

When doing research and working with human subjects, there are several ethical concerns as researchers must recognize.

Veal and Darcy (2014 p 107) highlight six ethical principles to recognize:

- The research should be beneficial to society
- Researchers should be suitably qualified and/or supervised to conduct the research.
- Subjects should take part freely
- Subjects should take part only on the basis of informed consent
- No harm should befall the research subjects
- Data should be honestly and rigorously analyzed, interpreted, and reported

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, initiating the first contact with potential referees was through an email, including information about the purpose of the research project and a short presentation of the researcher. Further, stating what it meant to participate in the research and that it was voluntary to participate. The email also attached an information letter created by the NSD with further information about the project. Before every interview, the participants were told that it was voluntary, that they could withdraw at any time without any reason, and that the information was confidential. The participants were also asked if the interview could be recorded to analyze purposes and sign an informed consent letter.

Due to the small population of 27 elite female referees, the possibility of identifying participants based on name, age, geographical affiliation, or even details revealed in the interview are high. Therefore, to comply with the ethical research standards, the responsibility of protecting the participant's identities was a top priority. Furthermore, it is crucial not to misuse the participants' trust, potentially harming them and future research projects by creating trust problems towards participating in later studies amongst the small female referee population. According to Tjora (2017), it is important to protect the subject's identity while ensuring that the meaning is not changed. Therefore, in the result chapter, quotes are presented without identifying factors; when age is used, only a broader term such as the early twenties or thirties is used.

3.8 NSD

As required by law, this research project has been reported and approved by the Norwegian center for research data (NSD), with the reference number: 344162.

The personal data used in this project have been securely stored and deleted according to the NSD's requirements. At the end of the project, a confirmation to the NSD was sent.

Through this chapter, the methods used have been presented and critically evaluated. In addition, a detailed description of the process has been provided, with attempts to reveal potential obstacles and how they were handled. Finally, the validity, reliability of the thesis was discussed, along with ethical considerations. In the next chapter, the results of the interviews and analysis will be provided.

4.0 Findings

In this chapter, the findings found through the interviews and the analysis are presented. The results are considered to have relevance to the topic, research questions, and the presented literature and theories in chapter two.

As a recap, the research questions are restated:

1. *What are the motivational factors for females to enter the referee role?*
2. *What have been the deciding factors for the female referees when determining to keep pursuing a career as a referee?*
3. *Do Norwegian female referees face challenges that they believe is linked to gender?*

The different sections in this chapter have their relevant categories, themes, and sub-themes. The two first categories are motivations for starting officiating football and reasons for continuing as a referee. Then the positive sides of being a referee, followed by role models, where the participant's role models through their career are presented. The two following sections explain the referee's thoughts on the difference between officiating males and females and their experience with support and mentoring from the Association. Finally, the challenges are presented with the categories, stereotyping, general harassment, sexism, and time management.

4.1 Motivations for start refereeing

The original question from the interview guide was, "Why did you begin as a football referee?" In some interviews, the respondent answered the question without questioning as they elaborated on this topic when introducing herself. When analyzing the data, two themes emerged; financial- and social motivation. Many of the participants mentioned multiple reasons for starting officiation, which indicates a complex topic.

Financial motivation

The theme of financial motivation was the most common reason amongst the respondents. Four out of six gave this as one reason why they started as a football referee. As the introduction chapter revealed, the financial compensation on the grassroots level varies between €19 and €75 per match. Even though the payment appears low, it is essential to remember that all the participants were young at the beginning of their careers; hence the amount must be evaluated from a youth's perspective.

“In the beginning I did it because of the money, it was a nice opportunity to earn some extra cash as a young kid”

“... when introduced to the referee role I realized that the compensation was a good way to earn some extra cash while in high school, the extra cash was nice to have...”

Social motivation

For some of the females, the social aspect played an essential role in starting officiating football. Under this theme, several sub-themes like friends and family and other influential adults and coaches played a vital part when beginning as a referee.

“I started playing football fairly late compared to other players, and my abilities was not that good, I had a friend that already was a football referee and she introduced me to the referee role, and even took me to one of the referee courses”

“I were quite temperamental as a player, and one of my football coaches suggested I took a referee course to gain a better understanding of the rules.”

4.2 Reasons for continuing as a referee

When the respondents were asked to reflect on significant, influential factors for staying in the officiating role, the data analysis revealed four themes: *social factors, development and mentoring, recognition and resources, and passion*. As in the previous section, the participants mentioned several influential factors for proceeding in the referee role.

Social factors

This factor was the most frequently mentioned reason for continuing as a referee. In addition, many of the respondents describe the importance of friendship and the sense of belonging as strong contributors.

“It’s a really good social environment, with a lot of good friends. It is a strong social atmosphere which makes it fun to officiate matches with others, and a perfect way to stay in football even though I am not an active player anymore.”

Further, one of the females underlines the benefits a solid social environment can have:

“...The social environment has played a vital role when things are rough, and you do not have your best match as a referee, people are there to cheer and support you and want the best for you...”

An excellent social environment does not only act as a support mechanism in difficult times. It also contributes to development through social discussions and keeps motivation up in training. One of the females elaborates:

“The social environment has been a determining factor for me. Our male colleagues have always had an established setting with resources and room for discussions, which we girls now have become a part of. This has been a tremendously crucial motivational factor. So, in addition, fellow referees and the referee teams are a great motivational factor in everyday situations such as training and traveling to games.”

Development and mentoring

The second theme, development and mentoring played an essential factor in the retention of the female participants. One of the respondents underlines the importance of being allowed to officiate males. The response also indicates that the mentoring varies depending on which regional association the individual belongs to. The mentoring and support category will be presented in-depth in a later section of this chapter.

“...I have been officiating in several of the regional associations, and it has been a great variety in how much mentoring I have received...It has been crucial for me that I was allowed to officiate male matches. In fact, it has been essential.”

Another informant also underlines the importance of mentoring from both the national and regional associations.

“...one of contributing factors have been solid mentoring from both the association and the regional association....”

A third participant describes the inevitable stagnation when developing as a referee and the importance of learning from mistakes. This indicates that a solid mentoring program is vital for helping referees overcome such stagnation and develop further.

“...that I continually have been able to develop myself as a referee, sooner or later you will get the feeling of stagnation, but it has only been in short periods, and I have always managed to learn from mistakes.”

Recognition and resources

Under the theme recognition and resources, the informants emphasized to maintain the motivation, the recognition and appreciation from people played a vital role. This makes sense since becoming and sustaining on an elite level requires numerous training hours and commitment, which could be challenging to maintain if no such recognition from important stakeholders were present.

“...I have been important that people are giving me recognition, especially in times when things are standing still, like advancement in officiating level.”

While the elite referees mainly have the national association as their primary resource, one of the respondents mentioned the regional and the national association in her arguments. Since the referee journey from grassroots to elite level are long and challenging (as seen in the referee path pyramid), the recognition and appreciation from the regional Association is probably the

first thing the referees encounters and acts as a core motivation to keep going. Two of the informants explains:

“...the increased professionalization is a key factor, in addition to more available resources. This gives us the feeling that we are being appreciated.”

“...increased recognition and attention from the association and regional association.”

The increased professionalization was mentioned, indicating that the association, as stated in the strategy document, is serious in recruiting and retaining a more significant number of female referees.

Passion

The fourth and final theme of factors for continuing officiating, passion for the sport, emerged. That the informants are passionate about football and the officiating role should not come as a big surprise. Even though not every participant mentioned passion as a factor, it is believed that it is such an integrated part of their reasons for continuing that they do not think much of it. Most people would probably not stick to a hobby or activity in the long run if passion was not present. It could also indicate that the desire for the officiating role is slowly increased when exposed to the position, which could be why this theme did not emerge under reasons for beginning as a referee. Two of the informants expressed their passion and joy for the role:

“...first and foremost because I think it's fun!”

“... It's the love for the game. I did not want to quit football, so I just stayed in the referee role. I simply love being a football referee!”

4.3 Positive sides of being a referee

To gain a broader understanding of the participant's experience as a referee, they were asked to reflect upon the positive sides of refereeing. The answers could further explain the identified retention factors and identify other motivational reasons that were not covered in the previous section. Through the analysis of the responses, it was clear that many of them could easily fit into previous themes. Especially the social aspect was mentioned by many of the participants. New themes that emerged were decision-making and personal gain.

Decision-making

Under this theme, the feeling of control, power asserted, and the responsibilities through the role were mentioned as positives and what made the referee role enjoyable. Two of the participants explained:

"...and to make decisions in a fair manner, that creates a good setting for the football match."

«... simply being the boss, you are in charge of the match."

Personal gain

In this theme, the answers linked to their personal development are categorized. The referee role seems to contribute to more than social and enjoyment needs, but also a more profound personal gain. As one of the respondent's states:

«I'm becoming a completely different person. Usually, I tend to be a little shy, but when I'm entering the pitch, I have to be in control of the match. It's an empowering feeling!"

For this female, the referee role allows her to switch between the social role of being shy into a forceful and assertive person when entering the pitch. This could underline the application of sports as a form of escapism from oneself. Further, another participant mentions that development on the pitch is transferable into other aspects of life:

«... personal development, that you can see the connection between development on the pitch and in my personal life.

4.4 Role models

During the interview, the participants were asked if they have had any role models during their referee career. Several sports have benefited dramatically from profiled athletes in the recruitment of new athletes (Wicker and Frick, 2016). Therefore, it was essential to investigate if this was the case for the participants. The replies revealed an even distribution between the gender and officiating level of the role models. Another important observation was when reflecting on the question; all the participants tended to think back to when they were young and at the beginning of their careers. One of the participants stated that although watching a lot of football, she had no role-models.

Male role model

This participant was one of the older of the participants, stating no female role models. This could be the result of the previous lack of profiled female referees in the past. Nevertheless, both Hauge and Øvrebø were highly recognized in football, both national and internationally, when they were active referees.

"No female role models, unfortunately. When I first started the focus on female referees were slim, so I had Terje Hauge, and Tom Henning Øvrebø as role models when I first started."

Female role model

The well-known female referees Steinlund and Steinhaus are mentioned by some of the participants. Steinlund has officiated in The Olympics, The FIFA-world cup, and Euros for females. She has also officiated as an assistant referee in the Elite division and cup final for men. While the German Steinhaus became the first professional female referee in 2007. Both being pioneers and have demonstrated that female referees can advance into elite male football, as one of the participants expresses:

«It has been many different since I first started, but the German referee Bibiana Steinhaus has been a great role model. She is the living proof that it is possible for female referees to advance to the top in men's football.»

The other respondent focuses on more than only the role models achievements:

"Yes, Hege Steinlund was one of my biggest role models. She has officiated in Eliteserien, and she is just a great person outside the pitch, kind and including."

Mixed role models

The following quote illustrates the changing nature of those who are acting as role models. For this respondent, it varies between gender and level of officiating of the role models. In the beginning, the local referees served as role models, demonstrating the social environment's importance found earlier in this chapter.

"It has mostly been the FIFA referees that belonged to the same regional Association as myself, Hagenes and Steen (both male elite referees), but recently I have begun to look up to female referees like Emilie Dokseth, which officiate in PostNord-ligaen. But in the very beginning, I did not have any special role models, just local referees that I met during training and seminars."

4.5 Differences between officiating male and females

To better understand the experience of elite female referees, the participants were asked what they thought were the biggest differences between officiating males and females, three themes emerged: communication, authority, and flow of the game. Communication and authority are closely related but kept in separate themes to create a smoother flow. Some of the respondents also preferred to officiate men, while some said that variation of both was preferable.

Communication

It was apparent that the respondents felt like communication was one of the most prominent differences between the genders on the pitch. When talking to the referee and the reaction towards decisions, the respondents often mentioned the player's communication style as

different. While the men's communication was much more direct and the reactions short-lived, female players tend to keep complaining over a more extended period, even several matches. As one of the respondents explained:

"It is a big difference, the male players tend to have an instant and impulsive reaction when disagreeing with a decision on the pitch, but this is often short lasted and then the situation is done. In comparison, some female players still argue with a decision made 30 minutes earlier in the match. If you have had some disputes with female players over several matches, it tends to be challenging to start over in the next game, while it's water under the bridge mentality with the males.

The way players complained was also brought up as a differentiation factor:

"...the female players tend to complain a lot more, while the boys tend to have an instant reaction, but after a short talk, the situation is over. This gives me more control over the match."

"...the communication between me as a ref and the players. The female players tend to be ruder and more irritated while the male players are more accepting when receiving a yellow card or a warning.

Authority

In the statement below, the official's perceived authority towards the players varies based on which gender they are officiating. One of the female referees mentioned that she needs to use more direct body language to prevent the typical gender roles from reducing her authority on the pitch while officiating men.

"It is a disputed subject. I usually say that it's not about which one is more difficult than the other, but rather differences. When officiating men, I must use more of myself to keep authority to prevent the typical gender roles from developing. It requires a lot more direct body language. When officiating females, the authority works differently. I feel like you are tested a lot more, it can take a couple of seasons before they accept that you are good enough for the level, while the men seem to accept and understand that it is a reason for me being on the pitch, because I'm good enough."

Another respondent has the same experiences and elaborates around why she thinks it is simpler to officiate males.

"...you have to use yourself differently when officiating males versus females. In a way, it is easier to officiate men since you get more acceptance for, let's say, a freekick given, while the females tend to challenge my decisions more, and more explaining is needed."

The flow of the game

This theme has a more technical approach to the differences. The focus is placed on how the two genders play the game. People with some knowledge of the sport should not be surprised that there tends to be some differences in playing styles, pace, and intensity. Nevertheless, the respondents had the following thoughts on the matter:

"...you can almost call them two different sport, but at the same time not. It's a lot more numerous and diverse situations during male matches, which gives you a wider range of experience for later use."

"... it's a lot harder to tell the difference between foul and a legal tackle. The fouls tend to be clearer in male matches. When giving a yellow card, several criteria have to be met for the foul to qualify for a card, which is sometimes unclear in women's football. However, this experience can vary between referees."

"I have officiated numerous male matches, and to be totally honest, I prefer to officiate men. The male playing style is more systematic and structured, making the play more predictable for me as a referee."

4.6 Mentoring and support from the association

When looking at the Association's responsibilities towards the elite referees in HR duties like development and compensation, it could be defined as an employer, thus playing a significant role in the experience of the referees. Therefore, it was vital to explore the relationship, and between the said parties. Therefore, participants were asked, «*How do you experience the support from your mentors and coaches from the National or regional Association?*» The answers were mostly positive, but that the support can vary depending on the regional association, one of the respondents elaborates further:

“It depends on who you meet and who you have a good relationship with, I have met many brilliant mentors which have been supportive and helped me a lot, but I have also met people that don’t give a damn about me as a referee, and that undermines my role as a referee... but beside of that the mentor program are now working perfectly, and have helped me tremendously to reach my goals through development conversations before and after games”

Another respondent describes the support and mentoring as something that have been strengthen since she first started as a referee.

“The development and support from the association have become very good in recent years, we have now access to mental and physical coaches, so things are starting to fall into place, but of course the higher level you are at the more support you get. But when I first started officiating in Toppserien, this was just something we did not have access to”

Despite an overall positive response from the females, some pointed out that the level of mentoring and support can vary a lot depending on which regional association you belong to, one of the girls said:

“... it can be a big difference between the regional associations, some of the associations are small in area size and it is easier to get closer mentoring compared to

regional associations where the area size is large, and you have to travel several hours just to meet others...”

The younger respondents seemed to have a pure positive relationship with the association and the mentoring. As one of the younger females describes:

«Very good, they have always been excellent with constructive feedback, and if I had a challenging match or situation, they have been there supporting me, you never need to deal with difficult stuff alone»

Another respondent has almost the same experience:

“The support from the association and regional association have been very good, they are always a call away if I need support after a poor match or if I just want constructive feedback”

To further explore the relationship, the respondents were then asked to reflect upon their relationship with the Association on an interpersonal level. In the participant's reflections, a specific key member in the referee department with the main responsibility of elite female referees was often mentioned.

“...I have an especially good relationship with [name], he is a great resource for us to have on our team! ...sadly, the reality is that in order for us female referees to be taken seriously, appreciated and getting recognition for the work we do, we need males that make way. Often when women try to fight for female rights, they often get marginalized and not taken seriously, but if a male does the same it has more breakthrough power, so yes we are totally dependent on people like him.”

Another respondent also mentioning the key member and the recent improvements:

“After [name] came in the experience have been easier, they are more available for feedback and questions, earlier it has been some critique aimed at the support from the association, especially when negative situations happen, but lucky I have not experienced much of that.”

Yet a third respondent mentioned the key member, but reflects around the potential challenges when having a male as their main contact:

“...due to Corona, the contact has not been as close as usual, but normally I have a good relationship with [name], which is our main contact, but sometimes it can be challenging for us females that a male that maybe not fully understand how us females thinks, but overall, he is very accommodating, with a we can solve this attitude, and I feel like we in most cases are taken seriously... we have been more included by the association”

Two of the females focused more on the regional association and with a positive attitude:

“... I belong to (specific regional association) and the support have been really, really good! They have focused a lot on me, especially in periods when I was the only female referee at the regional association”

“... the relationship has been good; the communication and the backing has been very good”

4.7 Challenges

The final section in the results chapter, challenges, are strongly connected to the research topic and the last research question:

"Do females face challenges linked to their gender as referees in Norway?"

As this section will reveal, there are different types of challenges that the participants meet, and with varying causes of motive. Some challenges presented are repulsive and shocking, while other problems are deemed a natural part of the referee role. The challenges are divided into four themes: stereotyping, general harassment, sexism, and time management.

Stereotyping

When the participants were asked if they have encountered or knew of stereotyping of female referees, the general response was that they had experienced both. A mentionable observation

is that the stereotyping directed towards the respondents tends to occur early in their officiating career, thus of young age. The stereotyping reported is organized into three sub-themes, *skill-based*, *advantage*, *underestimation*.

Skill-based stereotyping

Skill-based stereotyping is primarily directed at understanding the game and its rules. One of the participants describes further:

"It seems that people tend to think that a female referee doesn't understand the game. They don't understand why we are even on the pitch; they would prefer male referees, which in their eyes are more dominant."

Advantage

This theme explains the types of stereotyping that question the means that have led to the appearance of female referees in specific settings, like officiating at a particular level or attending a seminar for talented referees. This type of stereotyping includes the mindset that female referees have an unfair advantage of being prioritized due to their gender and not their present skills. One of the participants mentioned the advantage as a typical stereotype:

"[a popular belief is that] ...female referees are assigned to specific matches because of gender."

Another participant also identifies the gender advantage as something she had experienced. The quote below is a part of a more extended response that will reappear under the sexism theme. This only demonstrates that stereotypes have more than one source providing the idea.

"I got a commentary from one of the male colleagues that the reason for me being at the specific level had to be that I had slept my way into it."

Underestimation

The theme of underestimating covers other stakeholders' assumptions towards female referees, both intentionally and unintentionally, such as mistaken role identity and adjustment of attitudes. The first respondent explains a typically mistaken role identity:

"I was the main referee in a team of two male assistant referees, and as customs requires, the main referee is always in the middle, between the assistant referees, when greeting players and coaches. So as the coaches approached to greet us, they greeted the male assistant referees first, and when noticing that I was the main referee, they seemed a little confused and said Oh, you are the main referee."

It could be argued that the coaches in the said example just made an honest mistake without any hostile intentions. Regardless, such situations could prove that some stereotypes are programmed into people's behavior, reproducing such stereotypes. A second respondent had experienced something similar:

"...not everyone seems to be accustomed to having a female referee. I have even been called Jørgen (a typical Norwegian male name) by a coach."

The third example shows the adjustment of behavior and apparent underestimation of a female respondent before a match:

"I was around 19, officiating in the third division, so the teams were not that serious. I had no assistant referees with me, so I was officiating on my own. When I sat in the dressing room, I could hear through the wall the coach saying: "Today we have a female referee, so I want you to be kind to her." My first thought was, Is that even necessary to say? Then, I could hear the players followed up with comments like "girls are so bad at refereeing" and similar comments."

Telling if the coach's comment was intentionally good or not is difficult to say; despite the effort, the respondent felt that she was underestimated and expressed further in the interview:

"...it gave me mixed feelings, but my main thought was that that I was going to prove to them that there is no reason for treating me differently because I'm good at what I'm doing!"

Do you remember how it went?

"The match went well!"

General harassment

This section includes harassment not related to the referees' gender, sexual orientation, or other identity factors but most likely due to situations during a match. The main question was if the participants had experienced any form of harassment before, during, or after a game.

The participants stated that players and coaches were most often the harassers, but they have also experienced harassment from spectators, parents, other colleagues in the football family. It is also noteworthy to mention the pattern of the referees being young and inexperienced when they encountered most of the harassment reported.

[Have you experienced harassment?] "A little bit, but it has never been that serious, but critical statements have led to me doubting my skills, nothing too dramatic but unpleasant. Nasty comments are a typical thing, especially when I was young. I was not used to such comments, but after a while, you learn to ignore them."

The following participants had a few bad experiences, but some were more serious:

"Yes, but luckily not too much during my career, maybe three situations that no referee should experience."

The respondent was then asked if she could describe one of the situations:

"...In my earlier officiating days when I was young and inexperienced. I remember one player getting super angry when receiving a red card that he started charging towards me; I told him to step away and not come any closer. He got even more furious, which resulted in other players had to escort him away from me."

A similar situation was described by one of the other informants. This example was also from a period when the informant was young:

"...yes, and unfortunately, I think almost every referee has experienced some type of harassment from players, parents, and coaches."

The informant was then asked if she had any specific examples from her own experience:

"There is one situation from when I was younger that I remember quite well. One goalkeeper went ballistic over a call I did, and his extreme reaction resulted in him receiving a red card. He got extremely verbal and intense, and one of the coaches had to drag him off the pitch! After the match parents came over asking me if I was all right. Besides this situation, there have been small incidents, but nothing major."

The following example for one of the participants indicates that harassment is not only given by players:

"I was officiating a foreign team in Norway cup. Not every player was that good with the English language, the communication suffered, and maybe my officiating was not perfect either. However, after the game, the coach was sprinting towards me, threatening me. I remember the situation as very unpleasant, but besides that, nothing else of major impact. Just a couple of comments now and then."

Sexism

This theme collects the types of harassment, and exclusion which is linked to the gender of the recipient. As the section will uncover, some incidents can be classified as severe and repulsive.

The first example is one of the most serious of all responses:

"I had finally managed to argue my way into officiating a male match, and during the game, one of the players was borderline of getting his second yellow card, so I told him just as I passed by him that he should calm down unless he wanted a red card. Then he replied with something like, if I did not shut up, he was going to rape me in the changing rooms after the match. I was only 18 years old at the time, and I did not have my own changing room, so I had to wait for the teams to be done for I could change, so that was a traumatic experience."

How was the situation handled after the match?

"The case got much attention, and in the end, I was not allowed to officiate men anymore, so as a response, I changed to another regional association."

Shockingly as the incident on the pitch, the response from the regional association was almost as bad by excluding a young referee from officiating male games instead of helping her gaining confidence to continue officiating the opposite gender. Luckily, this individual had enough motivation and willpower to shake both the incident and the regional associations handling and kept officiating men in another regional association. Unfortunately, another example of gender harassment, this time outside of the pitch, was described by one of the participants:

"It has been some incidents outside the pitch; the classic example is when you live in a small town, and there are limited selections of bars and places to go to when you want to enjoy yourself, so you are destined to meet some of the players at some point. I have then received messages from players that are interested in me, which have had a sexual undertone. This has been uncomfortable, especially when I'm going to meet them again and officiate them in matches."

Thus far, the harassment has its origin from players and coaches, but there are also examples of harassment from other referee colleagues as one of the participants describes:

"...at that time, I had recently gotten the opportunity to officiate a high division men's game and in the same season promoted to a specific officiating level. At one of the referees' seminars, I got a commentary from one of the male colleagues that the reason for me being at the specific level had to be that I had slept my way into it. Fortunately, some of the other referees present in the room reacted towards the individual and put him in his place. One of the mentors also argued that the reason for me being at the level was based on my good rating from the season. This made me feel a lot better, but the comment was still unpleasant."

The participants mentioned more examples of harassment from colleagues:

"I have experienced that people during social gatherings in connection with referee seminars with alcohol involved have put their hands on my thighs. I have also received messages from people in higher positions, and when you are young, this power relationship makes the pressure to do stuff much higher."

One of the older participants recalls some of the resistance she experienced when she wanted to officiate men:

"In one of my previous regional associations, the opportunity for females to officiate men was very slim, and it was resistance against it. I remember that we were not allowed to do the physical test needed to qualify for officiating men. Their response to me wanting to do the physical test was that there was no need for it since I would not officiate men. They straight up refused to tell me when and where the test was held, but I figured it out and just turned up demanding to take the test. I was not allowed to run with the boys, so I had to run with the other girl present. The same thing happened a year later, I demanded running with boys and with their time limit, but again they refused. I then had to run alone and on the time limit for females, but I changed the time limit to match the male requirement and started running. I made the male requirements, and all of a sudden, I was allowed to officiate men!"

In addition to the question regarding their own experience of harassment, the participants were asked to reflect on what type of harassment is typical to receive as a referee and if they thought female and male referees received different types of harassment.

The participants believed the most common harassment towards referees to be a general critique of their skill level, understanding of the game, and the referee calls on the pitch. As for the difference in harassment towards male and female referees, one of the participants expressed the following statement:

"As a male referee, I think you receive harassment based on what people perceive as poor decision making, while if a female referee does the same, the call is bad because she is a woman. Sometimes it doesn't matter if the call is right. The fact that you are a woman means that you are by default a poor referee."

Time management

The last theme covers challenges regarding time spent on being an elite referee, including games, training, traveling, and other duties that befall the elite referee role. However, despite this sacrifice, all the females seemed to accept this fact as part of an elite referee's career; if not, they would most likely not be on the elite level.

"It depends on how you look at it, and it is quite time-consuming. If you fail, the investment of time and energy feels more like a waste of time... You will often feel mentally drained after matches, especially if you had a poor game, and that can affect your self-esteem negatively."

"...you have to sacrifice a lot of personal time. I have missed a lot of birthdays, weddings, and other social gatherings. Everything has to be organized around the football season."

5.0 Discussion

This chapter aims to connect the empirical findings with previous research, theories and frameworks to answer the three research questions. The figure below presents a visualization of the relationship between research questions and the themes created in the data analysis. Each box of themes next to the research question is believed to relate to answering the question. Note that social motivations and social factors are not the same theme but represent different social interactions, as presented in the result chapter. Since this research aimed towards an exploratory approach, some of the findings, such as the difference between officiating male and female, are not directly connected with any of the research questions but are interesting and could provide a broader understanding of the topic. Therefore, the discussion structure is based on the three research questions and will be presented in respective order.

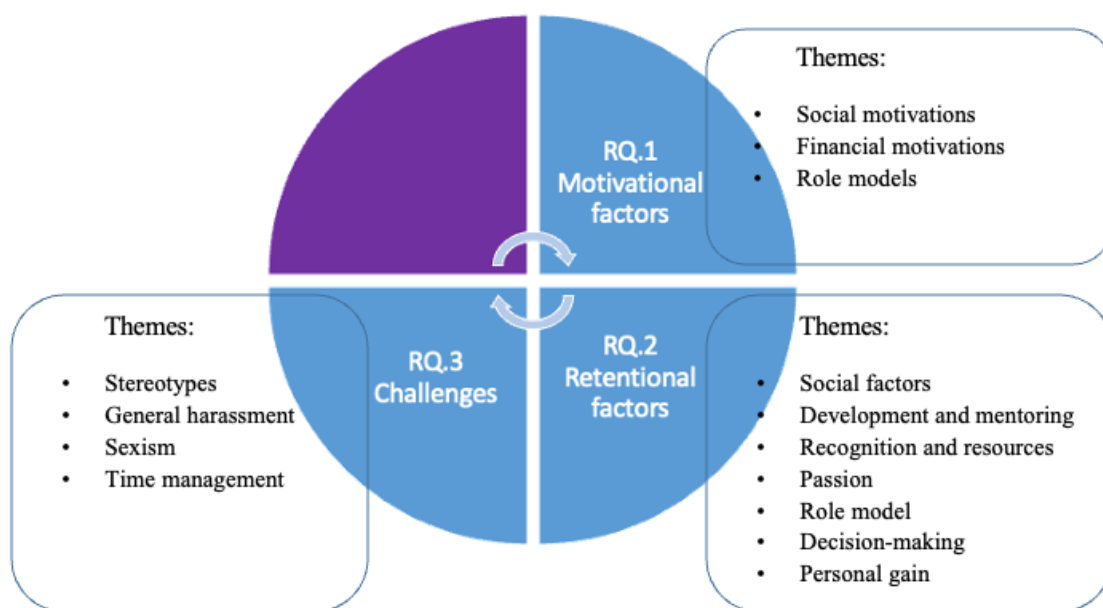


Figure 3 Research questions and themes

Research questions:

1. *What are the motivational factors for females to enter the referee role?*
2. *What have been the deciding factors for the female referees when determining to keep pursuing a career as a referee?*
3. *Do Norwegian female referees face challenges that they believe is linked to gender?*

5.1 RQ 1. Motivational factors

As presented in the result chapter, the motivation for starting as a referee was financial and social. Both factors are mentioned in previous studies as contributing factors for going into the referee role (Purdy and Snyder 1985; Auger et al. 2010; Friman et al. 2015). In addition to previous research the Referee retention scale will be used to discuss the findings.

An interesting observation is that financial motivation plays a significantly higher role in this thesis results than in other studies (Fry Sefton 1982; Furst 1989, 1991; Auger et al. 2010). An obvious explanation for this could be the time period for these studies, where financial compensation was presumably not that good, or difference in compensations practices. This hypothesis is further being supported by Johansen (2015), where financial motivation is more prominent and from a Norwegian context. To understand why financial motivation plays a vital role in entering the referee role, one have to look from the perspective of young people where the financial compensation may not be that modest (Table 2). It could also indicate that the additional benefits of the referee role were not communicated well enough, leaving only the monetary compensation as the apparent benefit. A potential future challenge for the football association could lead new referees only to see the financial benefits. Therefore, they could lose interest when they experience the financial benefits as non-satisfactory as they grew older, leading them to leave the referee role.

The second reason for starting as a referee was the social motivation which is thoroughly stated as one of the central contributors to enter the role as a sporting referee (Furst 1989, 1991; Snyder 1985; Friman et al. 2015; Johansen 2015; Dallaie 2020). As outlined in the result chapter, the motivation originated from friends, family, or other influential adults. Hence, these individuals can be identified as role models, despite the participants failing to identify them as such. This aligns with the *Trickle-up* and the *Inspirational effect* (Wicker & Frick, 2016), which states that role models inspire people to participate in sports. Surprisingly, none of the participants mentioned other referees as reasons for starting, although previous research has found significant evidence that elite referees from the top divisions have the inspirational effect of recruiting new people into the referee role (Wicker & Frick, 2016). One potential explanation could be, as one of the participants stated, female referees enjoy limited media attention compared to male referees. This statement is supported by researchers who found that not only does female football receive less media coverage, but the limited coverage tended to be with a

negative angle (Leonsen & Skarpenes, 2021; Skogvang, 2014). The fact that females receive less media attention makes potential female role models less visible for young girls outside the referee community, strengthening the assumption that the referee role is more suitable for males.

As discussed above, financial, and social factors were significant contributors to entering the referee role and were supported by previous research. In addition, the Referee retention scale (Ridinger et al., 2017) further supports the findings, as the two factors are central when entering the referee role. This indicates that these motivational factors are reasonably stable and applicable to most new referees in a western context, even if the sport differs. Moreover, the corresponding findings could provide some degree of generalizations of this study, which could help NFF develop future strategies to recruit more female referees.

5.2 RQ 2. Retentional factors

All the vital factors found for continuing refereeing in this study resembles previous studies and the RRC (Friman et al. 2015; Johansen 2015; Forbes et al. 2015; Ried & Dallai 2020; Ridinger et al. 2017). Interestingly, the financial motivation found under motives to begin refereeing is not mentioned as a reason for continuing. This finding is consistent with Johannsen's' (2015) and Ortega's' (2013) research which states elite referees to be less motivated by financial gains than their amateur peers. Since the financial compensation for referees in Norway is moderate, it is practically impossible to have it as a full-time job, leaving little room for financial gain as a notable retention factor. All concurring findings from this and previous research indicate that the individual retention factors for referees are relatively similar and stable over time. Moreover, strengthening the RRC's relevance and should be considered to a greater extent in the Football Association's work to retain female referees.

Like motivation to begin refereeing, the social factor was also an important factor in continuing, however, as another form of social interaction. The type of social factor mentioned by the participants was an outcome of the referee role, with the development of new social networks and friends within the referee community. Johansen (2015) and Reid & Dallaie (2020) had similar findings in their study, where social factors played a vital role in continuing as a referee. Furthermore, this proves that community is strong and important for individuals in the referee

role, making role models relevant in a retention context. As outlined in the result chapter, many had role models early in their refereeing careers, substantiating Wicker and Frick's (2016) *Trickle-up theory* and the motivational factor. Interestingly, the younger participants had multiple female elite referees as role models, which could indicate that elite female referees are getting more media attention and that strategies for female football from NFF and FIFA are showing results (FIFA, 2019; NFF, 2020b). But it is too early to conclude and should be explored in further to be able to draw any final conclusions.

Although two separate themes in the analysis, they are both closely linked because lack of resources would most likely negatively affect the availabilities for mentoring and development programs. Previous research has identified a lack of mentor and development programs as one of the main reasons female referees quit (Kim & Hong, 2016; Tingle et al., 2014).

The findings suggest that these programs have been improved in recent years but still vary between regional associations, which should be addressed to give all female referees the same opportunities as stated in NFFs vision.

Furthermore, an interesting discovery confirms that gender organizational cultures may still exist in associations with the need for a leading male figure to make way for female elite referees. By utilizing Burtons' (2015) multi-level framework, this phenomenon could arise from an institutional or an organizational level. Since the participants feel the need for a central male leader to make way indicates that hegemonic masculinity is still relevant and could make taking the step into leading roles difficult for future females.

Reid and Dallaie (2020) identified the importance of validation from male leaders as a crucial factor for female referees to continue as referees. The researchers concluded that the need for male validation was not based solely on gender but rather that the only leaders were male. As presented in appendix A, this is much the case for the football association and the referee department, making male leaders important in the validation process. On a reflective note, an intriguing contrast would have been to examine if Norwegian male elite referees had the same need for validation from leaders or if other factors like media coverage were enough validation.

To further explain why financial motivation is not a major reason for continuing, personal gain and passion are possible factors that have taken over as motivation. Thus, the participants have shifted from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation as they moved from amateur to elite level. This

shift in motivation has previously been reported in Norwegian elite referees by Johansen (2015). As a possible explanation for this shift, the gradual exposure to the referee role's benefits, like personal gain and transferable skills between the referee role and everyday life, outweighs the financial gain. Moreover, this is further demonstrated by one of the participants who describe an empowering feeling when entering the pitch, which is impossible to achieve through financial compensation. Thus, a potential dilemma for the association regarding increasing financial increments could potentially overshadow other benefits of the referee role.

5.3 RQ 3. Challenges linked to gender

In this part of the discussion, the multi-level framework, role theory, and stereotyping theory will illuminate the results against the third research question. Two of the themes stereotyping and sexism are believed to have a direct link with challenges related to gender, while general harassment and time management are of less relevance but are still included for a broader understanding of the topic. By applying the multi-level framework to the challenges found, it can be argued that it springs from a mix between Macro- and Meso-level. However, to blame NFF and its regional associations for actively playing a role in applying such stereotypes would have disregarded entirely their attempts to improve female football in Norway (Handlingsplan NFF, 2016b, Strategiplan 2020b). On the contrary, findings indicate that challenges linked to their gender are derived from individuals who still possess certain gender stereotypes and still keep reproducing the traditional gender roles in sports. Furthermore, findings from previous studies (Forbes et al. 2015; Nordstrom et al. 2016; Kim & Hong 2016) indicate similar challenges for female referees in other countries such as the UK, USA, and South Korea.

The empirical evidence shows that the elite female referees experience stereotyping similar to female colleagues in several studies (Forbes et al., 2015; Nordstrom et al., 2016). These related experiences across different contexts could indicate that such stereotypes are rooted in the global institutional level of football and therefore replicates even in countries with a high level of gender equality.

Skill-based stereotyping could be explained through the lens of role congruity theory (Joseph & Anderson, 2016), which explains that stereotyping happens when there is a perceived mismatch between the role requirements and the person's abilities. Therefore, the people

making these assumptions about female referees have an existing gender stereotype view which fuels their beliefs that females cannot referee. Ironically, the advantage stereotyping could stem from a Meso-level through the organizations' policies of hiring more females. According to Rohini and Ford (2012), female hiring policies and quotas could make people stereotype females as less qualified because they were hired through quotas, leading to the growth of gender stereotyping. This is further supported by Rudman and Fairchild (2004), stating that placing females in counter-stereotypical roles may lead to increased taste discrimination. If this is a possible reason why there are so few elite female referees in the men's elite football, are daring to say, but it is undoubtedly an interesting notion. The third type of stereotyping, underestimation of female referees, has also been found in Nordstroms et al.'s (2016) study but was believed to be subtle hence why it proved to have little effect on referees leaving. Similar findings appeared from this study's results. The participants described the experience of said stereotype as indirect, like the coach who asked the players to be extra kind to the female referee. Previous research (Hively & El-Alayli, 2014; Spencer et al., 2016; Stone et al., 1999) suggests that stereotype threat could appear when exposed to negative stereotypes about their groups' abilities. Interestingly, the evidence does not support this claim amongst the participants in this study, as they reported that the underestimation inspired them to prove themselves as good enough.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, NFF and the regional associations are attempting to improve the terms for female referees in recent years. Despite this, several participants experience sexist issues in the relationship with the association and some of their staff members. It is essential to consider these experiences as relatively "old" from a time perspective. The participants who reported these experiences were in their mid-twenties, early thirties, and the examples were from early in their careers. Nevertheless, turning to Burton's (2015) multi-level framework, these issues are meso-level issues, with the examples of a resistance culture towards female referees officiate males and key members denying the participants to participate in fitness testing. Reid and Dallaie (2020) concluded that encouragement from crucial stakeholders was essential for referees to climb towards the elite referee level. However, actively refusing female referees to participate could lead to a higher dropout rate and fewer females aiming to become elite referees, leading to fewer female role models. Overcoming such sexism from members of an organization that one expects to support you must have required tremendous motivation, showing a strong level of passion, which aligns with Nordstrom et al. (2016) research of female

referees. Another interesting finding confirming gender stereotyping and the role theory is the statement by one of the participants:

"As a male referee, I think you receive harassment based on what people perceive as poor decision making, while if a female referee does the same, the call is bad because she is a woman. Sometimes it doesn't matter if the call is right. The fact that you are a woman means that you are by default a poor referee."

Not only does this statement and other statements with the same content (Forbes et al., 2015) completely disregard the abilities of female referees. Furthermore, it also indicates the opposition towards female referees in male football, based on the differences between the two genders (Jones & Edwards, 2013). In fact, the said differences are true if looking at the general biological factors like strength and speed. However, the complexity of the referee role requires much more than just physical attributes, which makes the idea of females being inferior based on such factors unjustified and simply wrong (ibid). Taking it a step further, looking back to one of the participants who completed the physical requirements for officiating men further confirms that the physiological differences between the genders play a minor role. Therefore, it is apparent that such statements are purely based on a perceived assumption that females are still tied to traditional social norms and traditional gender roles (Harrison & Lynch, 2005). Moreover, it displays what researchers define as extrinsic sexism, which is based on a false negative perception of females' ability to perform specific roles or tasks like driving or being a football manager or referee. Consequently, judging the abilities of female referees based on gender stereotypes instead of their actual refereeing skills will reduce them to their sex, which the above statements ultimately do (Jones & Edwards, 2012).

Thus far, the two challenges discussed have directly been linked to the referees' gender and prove that there still are gender discriminating issues in a Norwegian sporting context. However, the fact that the participants still chose to pursue a career as an elite referee could indicate what the Referee retention scale (Ridinger et al. 2017) describes as lack of stress. Even though stress in sports referees, such as fear of failure and interpersonal conflicts, has been shown to indirectly affect referees' intention of dropping out (Taylor et al., 1990; Burke, 2000), it is believed that challenges in this study are more severe than stated stress factors. The participants described the severe incidents as few and far between and more frequent early in their careers – why this is, could be challenging to answer. However, one plausible reason could

be, as touched upon earlier, that female football strategies may have improved people's attitudes towards female participants. Such strategies could point to greater exposure to female football, which some research has proven to decrease prejudice toward female sports (Scheidler & Wagstaff, 2018). Moreover, a second plausible reason which can explain the phenomenon is that while the participants climb the refereeing pyramid, their coping skills towards harassment are improved to the point that nasty comments and remarks are ignored. The hypothesis is supported by Wolfson and Neaves' (2007) study where referees had adopted effective coping strategies to deal with misjudgments and harassment.

The two themes, general harassment, and time management are challenges linked with the referee role rather than gender. The referee role in football has long been a target for harassment and criticism from other stakeholders such as players, coaches, fans, and media (Forbes et al., 2015). The influencing power of the decisions a referee makes on the pitch has a massive impact on the outcome of a game. Since a referee is only human, mistakes are bound to happen, and it is then easy to blame the referee for undesirable results for a team. With the constant pressure to perform and the critical scrutiny of decisions made, it is understandable that individuals are reluctant to step into the referee role (Auger et al., 2010; Fry & Sefton, 1982).

The profound culture of refereeing being the scapegoat in football limits the recruitment of referees and could also result in higher stress levels, which has been described in the Referee retention scale (Ridinger et al., 2017) as an important retention factor. For female referees, this means that not only do they face general harassment towards the referee role, but they also have to deal with sexism and gender stereotypes. These dual challenges for female referees have been found in other studies such as Forbes et al.'s (2015). Moreover, by including the challenges with time management, the reason for the underrepresentation of female referees in Norway may originate from the fact that females have to deal with multiple challenges compared with their male colleagues.

Difference between officiating male and female players

Despite not being directly connected to any of the research questions, the participants' perceived differences in officiating males and females are discussed, with hopes of providing further insights into the female referees' experience. Although, as the empirical evidence shows, many participants argued that males tended to have a more instant reaction to decisions than female players, the fact that male tends to show more aggression in sports has been proved by several studies (Conroy et al., 2001; Tucker & Parks, 2001). Studies have also found that referees act differently between officiating the two genders and penalize female players more often (Coulomb-Cabagno et al., 2005). The empirical evidence of this study points to the same phenomenon, with the participants stating the need for different communication and authority styles towards male and female players. Thus, it is interesting to consider whether the female referees genuinely need to be more authoritarian towards male players, or as Coulomb-Cabagno et al. (2005) suggest that it is due to gender stereotypes. Unfortunately, based on the empirical data, there is no additional evidence supporting the argument that elite female referees act differently towards either gender due to gender stereotyping.

This chapter has discussed the empirical data in light of previous research, theories and frameworks to answer the three research questions. The findings discussed have, in many instances, been supported by theories and previous research.

In the next and last chapter, a conclusion of the study will be presented with answers to the three research questions, limitations of the study, suggestions for future research, and practical implications based on the findings.

6.0 Conclusion

This study aimed to narrow the research gap in Norwegian female football referee literature and explore the experiences of elite female referees in a Norwegian context through exploratory research design. Three research questions were developed:

1. *What are the motivational factors for females to enter the referee role?*
2. *What have been the deciding factors for the female referees when determining to keep pursuing a career as a referee?*
3. *Do Norwegian female referees face challenges that they believe are linked to gender?*

To answer the research questions, six in-depth interviews with active elite female referees were conducted. The empirical findings show that the participants overall have good experiences related to the referee role and that female referees in Norway receive increased resources and focus from the Norwegian Football Association than ever before. However, the underrepresentation of females as referees is still a growing concern, with only 6% of the total referees being females. Nevertheless, the increased focus from both NFF and FIFA may already bear fruits. The younger participants seemed to have fewer bad experiences as referees and had an overall positive attitude towards NFFs' support. With that said, the referee role is not without its challenges. Some of the findings indicated that there are still negative attitudes towards referees and predominantly female referees primarily based on gender stereotypes and sexism that could threaten the development and recruitment of current and future referees.

What are the motivational factors for females to enter the referee role?

To conclude the first research question, the empirical evidence revealed two main motivational factors for the females to enter the referee role *social* and *financial*. First, despite the relatively modest pay, it is essential to consider that the participants were young at the time of entering the referee role, making the monetary compensation significant. Secondly, the social factors were identified as significant others such as parents, friends, and coaches, who played a major role in introducing the referee role to the participants. In many cases, the significant others could be identified as role models.

What have been the deciding factors for the female referees when determining to keep pursuing a career as a referee?

The findings suggest *social factors, development and mentoring, recognition and resources, passion, role models, decision-making and personal gain* as the main retentional factors for the female referees in pursuing a career as a referee. Similar factors have been identified as important retention factors in referees in previous studies and the Referee retention scale.

Do Norwegian female referees face challenges that they believe are linked to gender?

Through the empirical data, four central challenges are typical to encounter as a female referee. However, two of the challenges, *stereotypes*, and *sexism*, are directly linked with gender, while the two other challenges are generally linked to the referee role. As a result, female football referees are not only subjected to the same criticism as male officials but are also forced to contend with challenges that are solely based on their gender.

6.1 Implications

Based on the conclusion, the Norwegian Football Association should base their recruitment and development strategies on the Referee retention scale. There should also be an increased focus on building profiled elite female referees who can act as future role models for the younger generations. In addition, it is essential to battle the negative attitudes towards female referees and the referee role within the football community. Potential measures could be to implement educational campaigns at local clubs to prevent gender stereotyping and sexism from getting a foothold from an early age. Furthermore, regional federations must provide the same tools and opportunities to referees regardless of which region of belonging.

6.2 Limitations and future research

This study aimed to explore the experience of elite female referees in a Norwegian context, which could make the findings inapplicable for other associations from different countries or cultures. Furthermore, as this thesis has an exploratory research design, the findings could only be described but not explained on a significant level. Finally, due to the small sample size, the generalization of the study is arguably statistically impossible.

Due to the severe lack of research on Norwegian female referees, the need for more research is apparent. Exploring the reasons behind the under-representation of female referees or investigating why females leave the referee role is an interesting and important topic. Lastly, further research on why female elite referees behaves differently when officiating males could return interesting insights into gender stereotyping.

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Appendix

Appendix A. Female representation in Norwegian Football (NFF, 2020a)

	Departments/Position	Female representation	Females/Total
NFF Headquarters			
	Board and Committees	38%	40/64
	Department leaders	42%	3/7
	Competitional	17%	
	Sales	15%	
	Sport	21%	
	Communication	60%	
	Admin & HR	50%	
NFF Regionally		22%	33/150
	Board member	48%	
	CEO	11%	2/18
	Coach and player developer	12%	5/41
	Consultant	19%	12/62
	Club developer	36%	8/22
	Leader for female development	86%	6/7
Club level			
	CEO	17%	
	Club secretary	59%	
	Administration	39%	
	Coaches	12%	3.337/27.623
	Head of volunteers	54%	
	Kiosk administrator	77%	
	Leader for female development	54%	

Appendix B. Interview guide.

Intervju guide

Hensikten med dette intervjuet er å en dypere forståelse rundt hvilke utfordringer kvinnelige dommere opplever i norsk fotball. I dette intervjuet ønsker jeg å få dine opplevde erfaringer og synspunkter rundt temaet.

Svarene i dette intervjuet vil bli brukt som grunnlag i min masteroppgave. Jeg er evig takknemlig for at du ønsker å delta og dele dine synspunkter!

NB! Alle deltakere i denne undersøkelsen er anonyme og du kan når som helst trekke deg fra prosjektet.

Problemstillingen:

- *Hvilke motivasjonsfaktorer gjorde at du startet å dømme?*
- *Hvilke faktorer gjorde at du fortsatte som dommer?*
- *Har du opplevd utfordringer som er knyttet opp mot kjønn, i rollen som dommer?*

Intro/ Du som dommer

Kan du fortelle litt om deg selv, og din dommerkarriere så langt?

Hvor gammel er du?

Hvor lenge har du vært aktiv dommer?

På hvilket nivå dømmer du? (Toppserien, Obos,)

Hvorfor valgte du å bli dommer?

Hvilke egenskaper gjør deg til en god dommer?

Styrker, Svakheter

Hvilke er de mest positive sidene ved å være dommer?

Er det enkelte hendelser som du ønsker å trekke frem?

Er ting fra dommeryrket som er verdifullt i andre settinger? Hvilke?

Hvilke er de mest negative sidene ved å være dommer?

Hva er de største utfordringene?

Hvilke faktorer har vært viktig for deg når du har valgt å fortsette som dommer?

Hvilke ambisjoner har du som dommer?

Hvilke forbilder har du hatt?

Hvor viktig er det med kvinnelige rollemodeller?

Tror du det er forskjell på å være kvinnelig og mannlig dommer?

Møter kvinnelige dommere på andre utfordringer enn mannlige dommere

Hvilke erfaringer har du fra dømming av menn?

Hvilke forskjeller vil du si det er å dømme menn kontra kvinner?

Har du møtt fordommer eller kjenner til stereotyper rundt det å være kvinnelig dommer?

Hvis ja, be kandidaten beskrive hvilke

Utføring Før/under/etter kamp

Kan du beskrive hva du gjør på en normal kampdag?

Hvilke forberedelser gjøres?

Hvordan oppleves holdningene til dommere fra lagleder, spillere og publikum under og etter kampene?

Hvilke type hets og sjikane er mest vanlig å oppleve som dommer?

Tror du kvinnelige og mannlige dommere mottar forskjellig type hets?

Tror du kvinner er mer utsatt enn menn?

Hvilke metoder bruker du for å unngå at hetsing går inn på deg?

Tror du mannlige og kvinnelige dommer blir behandlet forskjellig i kampsituasjon?

Av spillere, lagleder, publikum og Media?

Utføring i forbund og krets (organisasjon og kultur)

Hvilke tanker gjør du deg rundt Forbundets og Kretsens prioritering av dommere og dommerrollen kontra andre aspekter av fotballen? (Klubbutvikling, o.l)

Er utviklingen av dommere prioriter god nok?

Blir kvinnelige dommere prioritert på lik linje med mannlige dommere?

Kan du beskrive ditt forhold til Forbund og krets?

Har du opplevd diskriminering fra forbund eller krets fordi du er kvinnelig dommer?

Er det noen kulturelle normer som gjør det ekstra utfordrerne å være kvinnelig dommer?

Kan aspekter av organisasjonskulturene i Fotball- Norge være med på å styrke eller svekke rollen som kvinnelig dommer?

Hvis Ja, hvilke? Og på hvilken måte?

Hvorfor tror du det finnes færre kvinnelige dommere i norsk fotball?

Hva mener du må til for å få flere kvinner inn i fotballen og spesielt dommeryrket?

Tror du flere kvinner i ledene roller i forbund og krets vil gjøre det lettere for andre kvinner å satse på fotball?

Utfordringer på individ nivå

Kan du beskrive hvordan det er å balansere rollen som dommer med andre aspekter i livet som jobb, fritid?

Hva er de største utfordringene med å kombinere dommerrollen med jobb?

Kampoppsett? Midtuke kamper kontra lørdag og søndags-kamper?

Reiselengde?

Legger arbeidsgiver tilrette for at du skal kunne bruke tid på dømming?

Hvilke økonomiske kompensasjoner tilbyes?

Frikjøp av arbeidstid. Andre ting?

Hvilke treningsrutiner har du?

Tilbys det organisert trening?

Trenert du med andre toppdommere?

Hvordan oppleves støtten fra forbundet og krets?

Har du noen tanker rundt hva NFF, Krets eller andre aktører kan gjøre for å gjøre hverdagen lettere for dommere?

Hvilke råd vil du gi til unge jenter som ønsker å satse som dommer?

Oppsummering

Kan du gi en oppsummering rundt hva de største utfordringene for en kvinnelig fotballdommer?

Appendix C. Interview guide English version.

Interview guide

The purpose of this interview is to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges female referees experience in Norwegian football. In this interview, I want to get your experiences and views on the topic.

The answers in this interview will be used as a basis in my master's thesis. I am eternally grateful that you want to participate and share your views!

NB! All participants in this survey are anonymous and you can withdraw from the project at any time.

The research questions:

- *What are the motivational factors for females to enter the referee role?*
- *What have been the deciding factors for the female referees when determining to keep pursuing a career as a referee?*
- *Do Norwegian female referees face challenges that they believe are linked to gender?*

Intro / You as a referee

Can you tell us a little about yourself and your refereeing career so far?

How old are you?

How long have you been an active referee?

At what level do you referee? (Top series, Obos,)

Why did you choose to be a referee?

What qualities make you a good referee?

What are the most positive aspects of being a referee?

Are there any events that you would like to highlight?

Are there things from the referee profession that are valuable in other settings? Which ones?

What are the most negative aspects of being a referee?

What are the biggest challenges?

What factors have been important to you when you have chosen to continue as a referee?

What are your ambitions as a referee?

What role models have you had?

How important is it with female role models?

Do you think there is a difference between being a female and a male referee?

Meets female referees on challenges other than male referees

What experiences do you have from judging men?

What differences would you say there are in judging men versus women?

Have you encountered prejudice or are you familiar with stereotypes about being a female referee?

If so, ask the candidate to describe which ones

Before / during / after match

Can you describe what you do on a normal match day?

What preparations are being made?

How are the attitudes of referees from team leaders, players and the audience during and after matches?

What types of incitement and harassment are most common to experience as a referee?

Do you think female and male referees receive different types of harassment?

Do you think women are more vulnerable than men?

What methods do you use to avoid being provoked?

Do you think male and female referees are treated differently in match situations?

By players, team leader, audience, and Media?

Performances in federations and circles (organization and culture)

What thoughts do you have about the Associations (national and regional) prioritization of referees and the refereeing role versus other aspects of football? (Club development, etc.)

Is the development of referees priorities good enough?

Are female referees prioritized on an equal footing with male referees?

Can you describe your relationship with the National and regional association?

Have you experienced discrimination from the association due to your gender?

Are there any cultural norms that make it extra challenging to be a female referee?

Can aspects of the organizational cultures in Norway help to strengthen or weaken the role as a female referee?

If yes, which ones? And in what way?

Why do you think there are fewer female referees in Norwegian football?

What do you think is needed to get more women into football and especially the refereeing profession?

Do you think more women in leading roles in unions and circles will make it easier for other women to bet on football?

Challenges at the individual level

Can you describe what it is like to balance the role of referee with other aspects of life such as work, leisure?

What are the biggest challenges in combining the role of referee with work?

Match setup? Midweek matches versus Saturday and Sunday matches?

Travel length?

Does the employer make arrangements for you to spend time refereeing?

What financial compensation is offered?

What training routines do you have?

Is organized training offered?

Did you train with other top referees?

How is the support from the association?

Do you have any thoughts on what NFF, or other stakeholders can do to make everyday life easier for referees?

What advice would you give to young girls who want to be as a referee?

Summary

Can you give a summary of what the biggest challenges for a female football referee are?

Appendix D. NSD

Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet:

”[Hvilke utfordringer møter kvinnelige fotballdommere i Norge?”

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å identifisere hvilke utfordringer kvinnelige fotballdommere i Norge, sett fra kvinnelige dommers ståsted. I dette skrevet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

Formål

Formålet med dette prosjektet er å indentifisere hvilke utfordringer kvinnelige dommere møter i norsk fotball. Prosjektet er basen for min avsluttende masteroppgave i sport management ved Høyskolen i Molde. Problemstillingen for masteroppgaven er «Hvilke utfordringer møter kvinnelige fotballdommere i Norge?»

Informasjonene som samles inn vil bli brukt i min masteroppgave.

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?

Høyskolen i Molde er ansvarlig for prosjektet.

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?

Du får spørsmål om å delta fordi du er aktiv dommer i Toppserien, 1.divisjon kvinner, Obos- eller PostNord ligaen.

Alle aktive kvinnelige dommere vil bli spurt om de ønsker å delta. Kontaktopplysningene er hentet fra Fiks gjennom dommerseksjonen i Norges fotballforbund.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?

Dersom du velger å delta i prosjektet vil det innebære å delta på et intervju der du vil bli stilt åpne spørsmål knyttet til problemstillingen. Intervjuet vil ta ca. 45 minutter og være digitalt. (Zoom, Skype, Teams, etc.) Hovedspørsmålene vil omhandle hvilke utfordringer du som dommer opplever i fotballmiljøet, i forbindelse med kamper, resurser og utvikling. Det vil bli tatt lydopptak og notater av intervjuet.

Det er frivillig å delta

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle dine personopplysninger vil da bli slettet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger

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

Det er kun studenten (Geir Kenneth Solberg) og veileder (Solveig Straume) som vil ha tilgang til dine opplysninger. Data og mobile enheter brukt i dette prosjektet er kode beskyttet og personopplysninger (navn) vil bli erstattet med kode som lagres på egen navneliste på ett adskilt dokument.

Databehandler: Geir Kenneth Solberg

Deltakere som deltar i dette prosjektet vil ikke kunne bli gjenkjent i min masteroppgave, navn på deltakere vil bli erstattet med fiktive navn.

Hva skjer med opplysningene dine når vi avslutter forskningsprosjektet?

Opplysningene anonymiseres når prosjektet avsluttes/oppgaven er godkjent, noe som etter planen er 27.05.21. Etter prosjektets slutt vil alle personopplysninger og opptak slettes.

Dine rettigheter

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene,

å få rettet personopplysninger om deg,

å få slettet personopplysninger om deg, og

å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger.

Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?

Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra Høyskolen i Molde har NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Hvor kan jeg finne ut mer?

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

Høyskolen i Molde ved *Solveig Straume*. Tlf: 711 95 773. Epost: Solveig.Straume@himolde.no

Vårt personvernombud: Merete Ludviksen. Tlf.: 71214118 Epost: merete.ludviksen@himolde.no

Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til NSD sin vurdering av prosjektet, kan du ta kontakt med:

NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS på epost (personverntjenester@nsd.no) eller på telefon: 55 58 21 17.

Med vennlig hilsen

Veileder

Solveig Straume

Student

Geir Kenneth Solberg

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet *Hvilke utfordringer møter kvinnelige fotballdommere i Norge?* og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

å delta i *dybdeintervju*

at opplysninger om meg anonymiseres, ved fiktivt navn.

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)