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Women in Male-dominated occupations:

Gender inequalities in Cyprus National Guard

MASTER THESIS

MSc Human Resource Management

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ABSTRACT

Purpose:

This study presents the results of a research conducted to identify to what extend inequality exists between the two sexes, specifically in male-dominant work places. Focus has been placed on the experiences and opinions of current employees of the Cyprus National Guard.

Methodology:

The methodology used for the collection of the data used in the research paper is the qualitative research approach, via semi-structured interviews held. The interviewees were employees who do not have the same positions and/or do not have the same degree of power. The sample of interviewees consisted of 20 individuals who are currently employed by the Cyprus National Guard.

Findings:

The findings of the research paper, unfortunately, lead to the conclusion that there is evident discrimination and inequality between the sexes in the workplace and especially in male-dominated work environments. It is also understood, that a majority of the employees believe that the presence of women in the army is not imperative for the day to day running of the National Guard, on the contrary, the believe the existence of female employees causes more disturbances. Furthermore, workers tend to have prejudices against women working in the National Guard.

Originality / Value:

This study is based on previous literature on the prejudices, discrimination and bias that women experience in their workplace and in particular in male-dominated work environments. The research studies the data of Cyprus, a fact that strengthens the literature.

1. Introduction

Unfortunately, gender inequality is a timeless issue. From the beginning of time, women have been considered the weaker sex, and rights such as education, freedom of speech and equal pay are hardly ever a given, and often still require a fight to gain these rights, while male employees were so easily handed the same exact ones. Even today, in the 21st century, there are jobs and professions dominated by the male gender, and female involvement is usually non-existent or not welcomed. In cases where women attempt to enter such male chauvinist environments, the response they receive is usually not professional or appropriate, and very unfriendly.

The classification of jobs in female and male occupations has existed for decades. Women were established as the stay at home parent/spouse in charge of upholding the house and children, whilst men worked throughout the day, usually in manual labour. At the end of the 19th century, professions such as teaching and nursing were considered female jobs, as they related to the role of a care giver, an image women were accepted and imposed by society to have. Furthermore, contracts, professions including law, medicine and the church, excluded women from participation. Even in the 20th century, where technology open new professional paths and doors, women were not allowed to be involved due to their gender (Broadbent K., et al, 2017).

Over the years, women have sought to increase their stature and create movements that defend and promote gender equality and the right to equal opportunities. The goal of these movements has been to remove the obstacles that always seem to be in the way of women achieving a career, professional success and personal development.

A majority of the literature on gender and occupations refers to structural Barries to women's inclusion and advancement in the professional fields. Several universities have banned women from applying or admission to their academic programs, depriving them of their weight to education. The lack of education from the depravation of their rights has therefore, resulted in educated men ruling professions with a degree prerequisite. These stereotypes have affected the working world of today, since the wage gap between the two genders is evident. Women working in a male-dominated profession are paid less than men even though the experience or position may be the same, and women working in a female-dominated profession (i.e. nursing) are still paid less than the male employees. The prejudice against female employees may be direct,

experience-based or indirect and due to entrusted third parties. (González, M. et al, 2019)

1.1 Chapter Summary

The study consists of five chapters; the first chapter includes the introduction to the subject and summarized the chapters to follow. The second chapter reviews the literature review and lists the major challenges posed by gender discrimination in the working environment and professional sector. The remaining chapters focus on analyzing the methodology, findings of the research and discusses the results, limitations, and possibility of future research, as well as the conclusion, emphasizing the role of a Human Resources Department in companies and work settings.

2. Literature review

2.1 Male-dominated professions

According to Mariela V. Campuzano (2019), organizations and industries that reflect a more traditional work space are usually considered male-dominated. Organizations and industries created, maintained and controlled by men since their establishment in the professional world, are characterized by male characteristics such as aggression, determination, boldness and competition. As per Campuzano (2019), the United States Department of Labor, in 2014, defined male-dominated industries as non-traditional industries, where women take up less than 25% of the total workforce. Industries which fall under this category, especially in the United State, include sport management, politics, legal professions, higher education, the military and the media.

2.2 Male dominated jobs gender discrimination

According to ERA (Equal Rights Advocates), gender discrimination in the workplace comes in many different forms, but generally means that an employee or prospective employee is treated differently or less favorably due to their gender or sexuality. Individuals may also be treated differently by default, due to their association with organizations, groups or individuals related to a particular gender or of different sexual orientation.

Oftentimes, workers are discriminated against, for reasons other than just gender, like race or nationality. For example, a woman of color may be treated differently in the workplace compared to how a white female colleague is treated. Different treatment may include harassment (physical or psychological), paid less, evaluated more harshly or rejected from a promotion process due to the combination of gender and race. A survey conducted by Claudio Lucifora and Daria Vigani in 2016, which used data from 30 European countries for the period 1995 - 2010, found that having a female boss is associated with a lower rate of gender discrimination in the work place. When a woman takes over the direction of the company, discrimination is lower for female employees, and higher for male employees.

Crime studies focusing on female presence in, generally considered, male dominated occupations, often report that sexual harassment and discrimination is more likely to exist in such workplaces against the female population of the organization (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011). The reason women are subject to such conditions is most commonly due to male efforts to defend their position as that of a privileged employee in the workspace, making the women population of the workspace more vulnerable in these situations (DeCoster, Estes and Mueller, 1999). On the other hand, several studies show that increased female presence also increases the chances of harassment, due to the fact that the minority population of the workplace, being male, feel the need to confirm their power and control, due to insecurities caused from being outnumbered by the opposite sex (Wright, 2016).

The most common challenge faced by women in male-dominated workplaces is prejudice. According to the Cambridge dictionary, gender bias is unfair difference in the way women and men are treated. The idea that men are superior to women is problematic and needs to be critically examined because gender issues create sever issues in the workplace (James, C. K. ,2020).

A study carried out by Mckee and Sherriffs (1957) reported that men were ranked and appraised in a more favorable way than women.

The most stereotypical type of prejudice is one that requires women to be very sensitive, and on the other hand, male leaders are expected to have no feelings and receive praise from their colleagues for achieving their goals. Furthermore, stereotypes also exist regarding the position of either sex in the workspace, meaning women are considered suitable for certain types of jobs and positions, whereas men are suitable for other types (James, C. K. ,2020).

Women are expected to uphold their image of care givers, even in the workspace, by being cooperative, socially sensitive and civilized. These are traits which, all together, reflect the woman's role of being concerned for others (Heilman, 2012). Specific stereotypes, being characteristics that each gender should possess, are often the opposite for females and men; characteristics that should not be present by women relate to the actual behaviors associated with men. Such characteristics include self-determination, dominance, orientation and concentration for achieving goals, which are all stereotypical expectations from men, and not women (Heilman, 2012, page 123).

Due to the fact that women mostly held household roles throughout time, they may be more inclined to work in fields relating to nutrition, care or support services (King, E.B., 2008). The social role theory considers the roles individuals have in their families a direct effect on their career path and the cultivated gender stereotypes they consider appropriate. This acquired prejudice also affects the response these individuals expect to have based on the role they acquire in their professional career (Diekman & Eagly, 2000). More specifically, gender roles in the family are expected to lead to the gender differences and prejudices of the sexes, where mothers are more likely to follow role-related behaviors in the household and fathers are more likely to become part of income-oriented attitudes (Eagly, 1987).

In Europe, where child oriented policies were adopted such as paid parental leave and affordable childcare, the cost of having children is being reduced and this has contributed to the flexibility of the labor market to adapt to the needs and demands of motherhood and the workplace (Del Boca & Locatelli, 2006).

Even though women have made significant progress in labor-force participation, they still, unfortunately, remain belittled in occupations and fields which are considered traditionally male driven (Heilman, M. E., 2012).

2.3 Male dominated jobs wage gap

From olden days, women used to stay at home and take care of their families and children. The first steps towards women being involved in the labor market outside their homes, date back to before the Industrial Revolution. Women usually helped their husbands maintain the family and may have even contributed to their husbands' jobs, with no pay. In the rare cases when women were paid, they earned less than the equivalent man in their position, the well known wage-gap (Nieva, V. F., & Gutek, B.

A., 1981). Wage gap is the difference in pay between men and women. The ratio between wage and gender is usually measured by using data of full-time employees throughout the year and is compared to the annual salaries (hourly paid and full time employees) of the average man with that of the average woman (E.Gould, J.Schieder & K.Geier 2016).

Equal pay has been established since 1957, with the Treaty of Rome, however the gender pay gap still exists. According to the European Parliament website, female employees salaries are by 14% lower than the salaries earned by male employees, per hour, in the European Union.

The gender pay gap is defined as the difference between the average annual earnings of women and men. Average annual earnings are wages paid to employees before deducting income tax and social security contributions. When calculating this figure, only companies with 10 or more employees are taken into account, and in the 2019 average pay gap calculations, the difference between wages of two genders is 14.1%.

A survey conducted on the gender pay gap using Cypriot data by Christofides L. και Vrachimis K. (2007) during 1990-1991, 1996-1997 and 2002-2003, showed that the average wage gap decreased from 0.572 log units in 1990-1991, to 0,313 units in 1996-1997 and to 0.26 units in 2002-2003. According to the aforementioned researchers, the reduction observed was due to the improvement of productive characteristics (i.e. education) of the female workforce with the passing of the years. It is also reported that the pay gap between 1996-1997 and 2002-2003 is more likely to be due to differences in non-measurable characteristics or possible discrimination in the workspace. Furthermore, the analysis of the distribution of the gap, across all surveys conducted on this matter, shows that the biggest difference in women's salaries in the workspace occurs in the employees of the higher earnings tier.

Even though men and women are legally equal, this is not the case when considering the economic position of each gender, as there is evident inequality in the labor market, such as segregation in sectors, occupations, work patterns, access to education and training, bias, payment policies and stereotypes (Emerek, R., 2006).

2.4 Career success in male-dominated occupations

Men have always had a leading role in significant areas, such as society, culture, politics and education. Women sacrificed their careers and devoted their time and lives to their families, mostly due to the lack of other options for the women who desired to become educated and follow a professional path.

Educations is one of the most crucial sectors in the female empowerment journey. The Beijing and Cairo conferences highlighted the importance of educating women, and adoptable measures were discussed to protect female rights, such as rights and access to education. The 4th World Conference on Women, which was hosted during the Beijing Conference (1995), focused on international efforts required to further assist the progress and advancement of women worldwide. Similar focus was also placed at the Cairo Conference (1994), the focal point being, according to the European Parliament, a number of objectives in the areas of population and development, and specifically on sustainable economic development, poverty eradication, education, gender equality, infant child and maternal mortality. Unprecedented concern was also raised regarding the needs and rights of marginalized groups in society, women and men separately, instead of setting goals and objectives based on a single demographic category of individuals.

Regarding Cypriot society data, in the 1970s the percentage of illiterate women had reached 15% of the total female population, whereas male illiteracy was only at 4%. The years leading up to 2011, for which the latest census of the population of Cyprus had been concluded, the percentage of illiterate females has decreased by 2% and the percentage of illiterate males has also decreased, by 1%.

Over the last 30 years, higher education has welcomed more women, older people and people belonging to the lower socio-economic classes of society, since until three decades ago, the percentage in higher education was only 19%, and such privilege was only enjoyed by member of elite societies (OECD, 2008).

Ever since gaining access to education, it has been noted that from the 1980s, women have earned more college/university degrees than men, and there are larger numbers of educated women in workplaces compared to the opposite gender (K. Elsesser, 2019).

Nevertheless, women still face multiple barriers to equal access in the workplace. Hymowitz and Schellhard in the 1986 Wall Street Journal, referred to the term "glass

ceiling", being a term used to describe the obstacles to success faced by women in their careers, especially when seeking higher positions or higher levels of salaries, whether the positions are for firms, the government, academic or part of non-profit organizations (Lockwood, N. (2004).

According to the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission (1995), the pay tends to be lower for women and minorities in higher positions of any industry than for men in the same jobs and occupations. Thus, the phenomenon of the glass ceiling is inevitably linked to the wage gap between the genders.

Maume (1999) concluded that the percentage of women in the workplace increases the possibility for men to be promoted and take on more senior and managerial positions. Female presence in the workplace simultaneously reduces the chance for women themselves to take on higher positions as those men are promoted to and the time frame needed for them to be presented with such an opportunity is extended.

Managerial positions are assumed to require aggression and emotional strength which do not align with the opinion the world and society has for female characters. (Heilman, M. E., 2012).

Leaderships styles are perceived by each style differently, partially due to the way each gender analyzes leadership itself. For instance, men see leadership as authoritative, whereas women perceive leadership as a way of facilitation. Women are also considered better at managing conflict, as they possess better listening, tolerance and empathy skills, while on the other hand, men focus on task completion, achieving goals, collecting information and winning, by having all the answers. (Growe & Montgomery, 2000). Women's strengths are often overlooked and, subsequently considered weaknesses, and the notion that they can hold positions of power and leadership are therefore not acceptable (Kiamba31, J. M., 2009).

Society, generally uses gender stereotypes as a driving force, leading to gender bias, influencing organizations' decisions to hire or promote an employee. For example, when faced with two equal candidates to fill a single available position, recruiters often opt for the candidate who better fits the stereotype of the position. In an organizational behavior study, Rudman and Phelan (2008) concluded that women's success in the workplace often triggers colleagues with inferior positions in a negative way, leading to backlash from both fellow female and male colleagues. More specifically, when a

female employee takes over positions of leadership and power, many of her colleagues respond negatively, due to the reason that they believe male employees are better fit for such roles. These negative responses are also evident in fellow female colleagues' behaviors, from the same work environment, due to jealousy they may feel towards their promoted co-worker, in many cases spreading rumors and refusing nofollow orders, even though they are now promoted and considered of a superior position (James, C. K., 2020).

Nonetheless, gradually, with the introduction of new policies and rules regarding equality in the work place, it has been noted that an increased number of women are taking on leading positions in various organizations and industries, even though the issue with promoting men over women has not been completely resolved. As a result, female progression in the professional setting has improved and positions once considered male-dominated are now available for women to fill in (James, C. K., 2020).

3. Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to show all the actions and methods used during this research paper, such as methods used for data collection and analysis of said data. Furthermore, the results of the research conducted and presented and analyzed.

3.1 Method of research

A qualitative research method has been used for the purpose of conducting this study and data collection. Qualitative research is based on the fundamental idea that reality is subjective, and is determined by a person's perception or opinion (Croplye, A. J., 2019).

More specifically, qualitative research is used to acquire necessary knowledge through narratives and interviews with individuals who relate to the research topic and question at hand. The data collected from such sources can be in various formats, as the interviews themselves can either be conducted verbally, in writing, recorded in sound or video format, works of art or even results from day to day, close and systematic observation of individuals in their everyday life in relation to the topic being tested.

The research enigma of this study is associated with the discrimination women may face in a male-dominated professions, such as the Cyprus National Guard. Thus, with

the use of qualitative research, a collection of data will be achieved based on the experiences and opinions of employees of the Cyprus National Guard.

As mentioned by Sofaer S. (1999), qualitative research plays an important role in simplifying the values, the language and the concepts attributed to the various roles individuals partake in organizations and communities.

Multiple methods for data collection was utilized to derive the results presented in this study, namely, triangulation. Triangulation is a method used to increase reliability and validity of research findings. Triangulation is also considered a technique used to validate qualitative research by converging information from various sources (Triangulation, D. S. (2014). By combining methods, the fundamental biases arising from the use of a single research method can be further reduced by using the resulting theories and observations (Noble, H., & Heale, R., 2019).

The use of multiple methods reflects an attempt to ensure an in-depth approach to this case. Objective reality can never be captured (Denzin, N. K., 2012). "Triangulation is not a tool or a strategy for validation, it is considered an alternative to validation" (Flick, 2007).

Triangulation is also an attempt to assist in the exploration and explanation of complex human behaviors, by using a variety of methods to give a report after considering multiple aspects. This is a process that allows data validation and can be used in both qualitative and qualitative studies (Noble, H., & Heale, R., 2019). Essentially, data triangulations combines various methods and perspectives resulting in a complete overall package of findings (Noble, H., Smith, J., 2015).

For the purpose of this study, the observation technique is inevitable, due to the fact that private interviews are conduced for the collection of data. Repetition is an equally important strategy for the purpose of data collection. Multiple measurements are required, over a long period of time, at different points on the timeline, in different situations or setting and by different people (Brink, H., 1993).

In the process of data collection through one-on-one interviews, the researcher needs to be prepared for the various characters of the interviewees. The various types include dominant talkers, long-winded participants, the "expert" type, argumentative types and shy people (Wilson, V.,2012). Preparation for techniques and tactics should also be considered in order for the researched to cope with all types of participants, thus

inspiring confidence among the interviewees. This will lead to honesty and transparency from the interviewees when answering the questions.

The interlinkage between researchers and participants is vital in the data collection process, since a balanced research relationship will encourage disclosure, trust and awareness of potential ethical issues (Orb, A., et al. (2001).

Through the answers given by the interviewees, the researched aims to understand how they experience, act and perceive each situation themselves, in order to investigate and analyze the results. This may be the closest possible solution to ratification.

The role of the researcher is also vital in terms of "knowledge production" as well as in ensuring the validity of the whole process (Kuzmanić, M., 2009). Consequently, reflectivity and transparency become the two most important core characteristics of the researcher (Kuzmanić, M., 2009).

Given that the validity of the answers is of great importance for the research to be considered genuine and trustworthy, the researcher needs to clarify to the participants that no personal information will be included in the research. For the purposes of this research, the interviewees needed to be aware that the only information to be recorded is the duration of their employment and their position in the Cyprus National Guard. Furthermore, the attitude of the researcher during the interview is a vital contributor to the validity of the answers, as the interviewee can be influenced by the attitude of the researched sitting across from him, also known as "researcher bias" (Kuzmanić, M., 2009). Additionally, due to the fact that the question to which the research attributes its results deals with discrimination and prejudice that an individual may have experienced in the workplace, there may be experiences that put the interviewee in a difficult and uncomfortable position. It is readily apparent that sensitive research can pose risks, such as the risk of re-victimization for participants, as well as the corresponding negative impact on the researchers, transcribers and coders, therefore it is important that the researchers have the necessary skills to manage and minimize such repercussions. (Melville, A., & Hincks, D., 2016).

3.2 Participants

The participants consisted of 20 individuals who took part in semi-structure interviews, one person at a time. The age group of the participants is from 22 to 52 years of age, including both sexes, and are all currently employed by the Cyprus National Guard. They also have different positions in different army camps. The only criterion on which their participation was based, was the current employment in the Cyprus National Guard, for over one year, in order for the individuals to have a more comprehensive view of how the working environment is and to what extend discrimination exists in the workplace. The average years of work experience of the specific participants is 6.3 years (refer to appendix A).

3.3 Procedure followed for collecting data

3.3.1 Sample method

Snowball sampling is a commonly used sampling method in qualitative research, used in medical science and various social sciences, including sociology, political science, anthropology and human geography (Kirchherr, J., & Charles, K. ,2018).

In the Business Research Methodology, John Dudovskiy refers to Snowball sampling (also known as chain-referral sampling) as the appropriate method used when the specified characteristics participants or samples need to have in the research are difficult to define.

However, for snowball sampling, personal interviews help build the confidence required by researchers to obtain referrals (Noy C.,2008).

In the present study, the samples used are employees of the Cyprus National Guard, belonging to both genders. In addition, the criterion that they had to meet in order to participate in the interview is to be an employee of the Cyprus National Guard for over 1 year in the army, in order to have a full understanding of the issue of discrimination, and not base their answers on isolated incidents.

After collecting the data of the initial sample, a list was created with the necessary personal data of the participants, for example the rank and the years of service. Participants were given a detailed description of the interview process, as well as about the protection of their personal data and confidentiality, the risks that may arise from participating in the study, their right to not proceed with the research or to not answer

questions they would consider manipulative, leading to a specific result. Furthermore, the interviewees were made aware of the purpose of the research and the fact that the conversations were recorded, using the researcher's personal mobile phone.

3.3.2 Method of observation

Observation is one of the most important aspects of research in the social sciences and at the same time, one of the most complex aspects. (Ciesielska M.et al 2018). The method of observation, for the purpose of this study, is considered necessary, since the people working in the National Guard tend to be more confidential than employees of other sectors and industries, but they also tend to be more reluctant to report details about their workspace due to professional military secrecy. Therefore, monitoring the reaction of the employees who participated in the interview is necessary and important, as far as the results are concerned.

3.3.3 Interview process

The interview process was conducted through one-on-one personal interviews. Initially, the interviews took place in public locations, such as cafes. However, due to the pandemic that developed during the research period, the interviews were further performed via the use of technology, as physical meetings could not take place. Kirchherr, J., & Charles, K. (2018) have argued that personal interviews are outdated and that there are no significant differences between information collected over the telephone and information collected through personal interviews. Specifically, Lo Iacono, V., Symonds, P., & Brown, D. H. (2016) have conducted research via Skype as a tool for the qualitative research method emphasizing the advantages of such a platform for interview purposes. They have concluded, that this interview method can bring heterogeneity to the research by allowing researchers to approach many different types of participants, without geographical or any other type of restrictions. Visual contact is also possible through virtual interviews, whereby the researcher can read and document the body language of the interview and record the process at the touch of a button.

In order to address all the issues that the researcher wanted to analyze, there was an interview guide (see Appendix B) which served as the backbone of the interviews conducted. Depending on the interviewee's answers, the order of the questions may have varied or additional questions added, however, they never deviated from the main topic.

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Semi-structure interviews are designed to elicit subjective responses from individuals about a particular situation or phenomenon they have experienced (McIntosh, M. J., & Morse, J. M. (2015). According to Beth L. Leech (2002) experiences are more appropriate when the researcher has limited knowledge of a subject or wants a more internal point of view.

The interviewees were informed from the beginning about the purpose of the research and about the fact that it is conducted in the context of the dissertation of the researcher, a postgraduate student, obtaining their degree. They were subsequently informed about the protection of their personal data and the recording of the interview they participated in. The recording is vital for the researcher, since any doubts arising or during the analysis process, the recording may be repeated, thus, providing a basis for reliability and validity (Al-Yateem, N., 2012). Therefore, in the data analysis process, the recorded files are considered a very important material for the researcher to be able to analyze common aspects collected through what has been said during the interview, as well as through the interviewers notes regarding the body language of the interviewee.

3.4 Data analysis

Thematic content analysis (TCA), a descriptive presentation of quality data, was used in the present research, in order to reveal common aspects among the interviewees. This technique is the most fundamental technique for the data analysis process in qualitative research (R. Anderson, 2007).

This technique was used during the carrying out of the study to create a detailed and descriptive record of the data collected through the interviews. The inductive method, which creates concepts, categories and topics from data with the ultimate goal of producing summaries of the primary data that outline the main categories, and provides indications for possible theoretical relationships, was also used for the data analysis. (Kyngäs H. (2020).

4. Results

The results deriving from the recorded interviews are further analyzed in this chapter. The detail in the perceptions and experiences of the people working in the National Guard in Cyprus are captured through the interviews taken place. The analysis of the data is based on the information and material collected from the interviews given by the employees. As mentioned above, the method chosen to collect the data is semi-structure interviews. Semi-structured interviews mean that even though a structure exists for the questions to be asked, if additional points or information would be accepted by the interviewee, as long as it does not deviate from the main topic. If the interviewee's comments are relevant to the purpose of the present study, the researcher directed the questions to the point where appropriate and honest information could be gathered, depending on the individual and their rank. Respondents' perceptions and experiences focused on various aspects and therefore, the findings are divided into topics. The main topics presented below have emerged from thematic content analysis, which creates a detailed and systematic recording of the codings and themes resulting from the interviews and observations of the participants. (P. Galanis, 2018)

4.1 Opinions of employees of the National Guard regarding the presence of discrimination and inequality

The opinions and perceptions of the people working in the Cyprus National Guard regarding the discrimination that exists in their workspace are recorded below. The individuals who participated in the interviews expressed their personal opinions on the subject.

Commenting on the discrimination in the army, Peter states:

"*Of course there are inequalities in the Cyprus National Guard.*"

Similarly, Jennifer states:

"*In no case can I say that there is no discrimination in my workplace.*"

Kelly mentioned:

"*The environment in which I work consist mainly of men. My superiors are used to working with men and many of them indicate that they'd prefer to work with men rather than women.*"

Alexander stated that:

"*I do not think a single male employee of the National Guard can deny that there are inequalities against women in our workplace. When women joined the army they ignited discriminations and inequalities.*"

The same opinions were expressed by Leo, Anthony, Nick and Adam, stating that:

"*Yes, discriminations exist. Although the army is a male profession, I feel that women have more power. They always manage to achieve what they want and win the sympathy of their superiors in their own way.*"

Joan and Christine had a smilier view, with Joan commenting that:

"*Discrimination and inequality exist. The point is, receiving a more discrimination attitude from our superiors leads our colleagues to feel wronged and behave more 'hostilely' toward us.*"

Cameron, Emma and Benjamin agree on their opinions, with Benjamin stating that:

"*There is definitely discrimination and inequality in my workplace. Women usually get more sympathy and glory. However, I believe that this would also happen in a work environment where women predominate. In such cases, it is very likely that male workers are valued more and suffer the same discrimination and inequalities as in the case of the army, which is considered a male-dominated profession.*"

Matthew mentioned:

"There have been many incidents, daily, that put us in a difficult position. There are two possibilities: either our superiors are not happy with the female employees and will load all the work on men, or they will be attached to women and demean the men. This, in my opinion, together with the incidents that take place, are the discrimination and inequalities in my workplace."

Olivia and Charlotte had the same opinion with each other, stating that:

"*It goes without saying, that there are inequalities and discrimination. I can remember several incidents that put me in an awkward position. Women, by their very nature, cannot take on the same responsibilities as men. This makes my male colleagues feel wronged and sometimes they do not approach or count on me and my fellow female colleagues."*

Jackson states that:

« Inequalities in my work environment are more intense with the entry of women into the field. Women are more favored both in terms of sentences/punishment and in the area of exercises. Also, a superior of mine will more easily believe a woman's comments on a subject than a man. But, there are exceptions and people who behave in the same way, for both genders. I believe this is a matter of character, education and possibly, the upbringing of the individual."

Andrew comments:

"It is natural for men in the army to feel less favored, since, until now, they were used to working with people of their own gender. Nevertheless, all issues can be resolved through discussion and equal treatment towards both genders."

Beatrice stated that:

"It's certain that there are inequalities in my workplace. The issue is whether it is up to each individual to take advantage of each other's sympathy or favor, to the detriment of others."

Finally, Chloe comments that:

"I believe inequalities and discrimination exist in all workplaces. In professions that have a majority of one of the two sexes, they are more visible."

4.2 Experiences related to prejudices against both genders in the National Guard

The views and experiences of the National Guard workers appear to be divided. Due to the fact that the interviews were conducted by people of both genders, it initially seems that defense exists in the gender of the interviewee.

Peter stated that:

"I do not consider women to belong in the military. On the contrary, with the entry of women in the National Guard, there have been increased conflicts between the workers and discrimination against men who are at the same level as women."

Chloe and Beatrice have similar views, with Chloe stating that:

"Many people whom, when they see a woman, think that you should not be in the army. The bad thing is that they make sure to show it and usually in a very ugly way and various offensive insinuations."

Andrew states that:

"It's not a matter of prejudice or inequality or anything, it's a matter of muscle strength. If a woman is thin and cannot cope with a course, for example, with her equipment, then we will remove some weight off it, the same will happen if a man does not have the proper muscle strength."

H Kelly, Joan, Cameron and Christine have similar views with the latter, stating that:

"Several times, especially when I first joined the National Guard workforce, I felt I was being treated in ways I did not deserve. Many of my colleagues bluntly told me that, as a woman, I have no place in the army."

Alexander states that*:*

"Women are quite sensitive. I think I need to be more careful with the way I talk to my female colleagues. I can express myself more freely when I am with a man."

Matthew also commented:

"Women do not belong in the National Guard. The only help they can offer is office work and it would be better if they were hired as secretaries and not as soldiers."

Jackson and Adam have similar views, stating:

"Women, due to their gynecological issues, often take advantage of their situation not to attend various external jobs."

Emma, Olivia and Charlotte raise similar issues, with Olivia stating that:

"Our male colleagues believe that women, at any level, can offer nothing to the National Guard, and this can be understood from their words and behavior, which is usually distant."

Leo and Nick had the same view as Anthony, who stated that:

"*My opinion is that most women joined the National Guard because they wanted to find a man."*

Jennifer reports that:

"There are many incidents that show prejudice against women in the National Guard exists, for instance refusing to place women in outposts which are usually in 'riskier' locations, because they are weak and unable to protect themselves."

5. Discussions

This chapter presents the discussion based on the results obtained from the analysis of the data retrieved for the purposes of this study. The ultimate goal of the research is to find out if there is discrimination based on gender, in a predominantly male-dominated profession such as the military and more specifically within the Cyprus National Guard, and this can be seen from the experiences and perceptions of existing employees.

The literature review indicates that there are barriers for women to enter male-dominated professions, however the aim of this research is to promote the existing points of view and create ideas that will help reduce prejudice, discrimination and any form of racism in the workplace against genders.

At the end of this chapter, there are suggestions for possible future research as well as the limitations that exist in the present study. Additionally, the role of Human Resources (HR) and recommendations for possible ways to deal with discrimination in the Cyprus National Guard.

5.1 Discrimination and inequalities

The resulting evidence of the survey conducted show that women feel they are not being equally treated with the male employees of the National Guard. On the other hand, most male employees feel unfairness which is mostly attributed to the entry of women into the army, since their daily lives in their workplace has changed significantly. The issue that arises is that, due to the stereotype that most women are fragile, they are handled differently by their superiors and employees who are in the same position as them, but of the opposite gender., leading to evident inequality. Nevertheless, women workers in the Cyprus National Guard agree that they are not treated the same as men in labor matters. Female workers report that since returning from maternity leave to work, they have noticed changes in the behavior of their colleague. However, they believe that

motherhood is a huge and crucial role to take on, but the role should not be a burden solely for the mothers, and should also include the contribution of the father by taking paternity leave, in order to avoid depriving the mother from salary increases, promotions and/or less available annual leave.

Furthermore, when it comes to work issues, the female participants stated that they feel marginalized, unlike their male colleagues. Generally speaking, the opinion of the majority of the interviewees was that there are women who enjoy the favoritism they may receive from their superiors, without denying that men have a more dominated presence in this profession. Most men in senior positions believe that they could not allocate the same tasks to their female and male colleagues, a fact that is acknowledged by all employees, regardless of their gender.

The literature review presented in this study indicates that women working in male-dominated occupations are more likely to be treated unequally in the workplace. Men, who make up the majority of the workforce population of the National Guard are likely to impose their power over their fellow female colleagues. (Bobbitt-Zeher,2011), (DeCoster, Estes και Mueller 1999). In situations where women have superior positions in their workplace, they are not treated the same way by their male colleagues, in either the same position as them or even lower ranks (James, C. K. 2020), (McKee και Sherriffs, 1957), (Wright, 2016), (Heilman, M. E., 2012). Men have generally proven to inflict their power and authority by underestimating and undermining women, stating that they do not belong in a male-dominated profession, such as the National Guard (Jandeska & Kraimer, 2005), (Bligh & Kohles, 2008; Fisher, 2015). In terms of motherhood, the information derived from the literature review states that policies have now been developed to contribute to the co-existence of motherhood and work *(Del Boca & Locatelli, 2006)*.

5.2 Prejudice and stereotypes

The biggest challenges faced by women who choose to pursue careers in male-dominated professions are prejudice and stereotypes.

Although there seems to be more emphasis on gender equality in the workplace nowadays, unfortunately, prejudices have not become extinct. Women working in male-dominated professions, regardless of the efforts put into rising above and

succeeding in more senior positions, are suppressed by the prejudices and stereotypes that exist regarding their gender.

The findings of this research paper lead to the prejudices existing in the National Guards, with most male colleagues suggesting that positions in the military are not for women and they would be of better use in an office position. Even in cases when women seek to take on more manual-labor type of tasks and jobs, they are usually not trusted by their colleagues and end up being assigned office tasks.

The stereotypes categorizing women as sensitive, fragile and weak condemns them to remain in positions which do not require any specialized skills, other than the secretarial skills of an office employee. Females in higher rankings have described numerous occasions and situations in which they were impeded from properly performing their duties due to the stereotypes clouding over their gender in such positions. There are also occasions where women as sat on the sidelines, on the pretext that they cannot conduct outdoor tasks, due to their body structure being female and not male. Additionally, stereotypes and prejudices regarding women's sensitivity and expression have made male employees prefer to communicate and cooperate with their fellow male colleagues than with female ones. This is because they believe it is their duty to be more sensitive and careful when discussing matters with women, so as to not make them cry.

Another issue of prejudice is the idea that with the entry of women in the army, high tensions are evident between colleagues. Women are considered the reason behind the intrigue in the workplace, and it is believed that the only reason they choose careers in the army is to find a sexual partner. Employees themselves often realize that in some cases, they tend to categorize all women and put them in the same basket, all because a minority of female employees agree with the prejudices surrounding women, of being sensitive and avoiding responsibilities.

There seems to be a clear reference to stereotypes and prejudices in the literature review, concerning male-dominated professions, specifically the professions that want women to conduct only certain types of duties, nothing more or less (Emerek, R., 2006), (James, C. K. ,2020). Prejudices and stereotypes concerning women being sensitive and fragile have not changed over time, and still haunt the image women try to create in their workplaces (Heilman, M. E., 2012).

5.3 Limitations

One of the limitations of the study is the small number of participants in the research. Part of the semi-structured interview was about experiences and references to events that had happened recently or in the past, therefore since some time may have elapsed since the events occurred, there may be gaps in the information provided from the interviewees. Furthermore, the interview process can cause anxiety or confusion to the interviewees, due to the sensitive information they are providing, and they may not feel as comfortable expressing themselves as they would have, had the questions been asked in writing and without the need of the face-to-face interview with the researcher. Lastly, despite the briefing given at the initial stage about the security and protection of the personal data and the preservation of anonymity, the employees of the National Guard, due to the nature of their work, have a confidentiality principle to follow, thus some information may not have been provided as it may have been considered too private and they judged it to be safer not to mention such information to avoid violation of their privacy.

5.4 Future research

After examining the issue of inequality between women and men in a male-dominated profession, using Cypriot data, the present study could be significant for researchers who want to focus on issues relating to gender inequality.

Through the interviews carried out with current National Guard executives, a variety of issues have been addressed that affect employees who appear to be a minority population in their workplace. The way in which employees perceive discrimination against them and the way they feel that the issue can be addressed is important for researchers on the subject of discrimination in the workplace.

Possible future research could refer to various forms of racism or to the psychological state of discriminated workers, issues that are not analyzed in the present research, but for which evidence exists from the experiences of the workers. In such case, future researchers will be able to follow the qualitative research method through semi-structured interviews and focus on a larger percentage of employees. Additionally, an analysis and extension of the experiences and perceptions of the employees who took part in this study could be put together.

Lastly, the present investigation was conducted only with the Republic of Cyprus, and concerns only the employees of the National Guard of Cyprus. This may inspire future

researchers to collect and analyze data in other countries so that comparison can be made between perceptions both within the EU and abroad.

5.5 Conclusion

The goal of this study was to show whether employees of the Cyprus National Guard face issues of discrimination and prejudice in their workplace. Previous research has shown that women find it easier to deal with such discrimination existing in a male-dominated work environment.

Employees who participated in this study shared their views and experiences on the subject and all noticed the existence of prejudice and discriminations against either themselves or this happening to a colleague in their presence.

The result of the study shows that people working in the Cyprus National Guard are discriminated against and often fall victims to gender-based prejudices, and according to the literature review, most of the victims of these behaviors are women.

The entry of women into the National Guard has caused a sense of insecurity among male employees, since they perceive colleagues and their superiors behaving more leniently towards women. This causes male employees form a negative opinion of women and the duties they can offer to the National Guard.

However, prejudices exist and have not been created solely out of a sense of insecurity. Participants reported that behaviors by women who abused the potential favoritism of their superiors towards them made them feel that women National Guard employees were all the same and all behaved in the same manor. Very often, women who want to excel in their career and prove their abilities and capabilities are not given the opportunity to do so. As a result, these women are sat on the side lines and spend the remaining years of their employment doing tasks that do not require any type of expertise or specialization.

5.6 The role of HR

The Human Resources department deals with the management of the most important "asset" of financial institutions and companies; their employees (Moschous, A., 2018).

This department undertakes and handles several tasks that are directly related to employment issues, such as payroll, insurances, training and employee development,

and they are responsible for providing information regarding legal issues affecting the employees contracts and employment.

A greater coherence of policies, procedures and systems can be monitored and applied by the HR, and at the same time, they inform the senior ranked employees about such policies, procedures and systems, in order for their significance to be passed on to all employees. A sense of satisfaction and motivations is passed on to employees, this way, and enables them to be loyal and committed to their job, and creating a mean of communication between the various rankings of the profession (Kim, S., & Ryu, S. (2011).

Retention policies include adequate compensation, training programs and competitive benefit packages. When an employee leaves, the HR department, on several occasions, interviews the person about to leave, to assess the employee's reasons for leaving in order to develop better policies and practices to keep employees satisfied.

5.7 The role of Human Resources and ways of tackling gender inequality in the Cyprus National Guard

The role of the Human Resources department in professions such as the National Guard is crucial. Thousands of employees depend on the HR department, for the training and empowerment of soldiers and military personnel, which is done through group Training Centers. Some of the tactics used from the trainers are:

- Informing future employees about gender discrimination and the impact is has on people to which the discriminations relate to.

- Training seminars to tackle stereotypes in the workplace.

- On-the-job training for collaborating with people of the opposite sex, working towards a common goal.

In particular, attitudes and behaviors related to prejudice, stereotypes, racism and bias can be handled and battered by other institutions, such as society, upbringing and school (Bielby, W. T. ,2000). However, when these bodies cannot eliminate or reduce the degree of prejudice and other behaviors related to discrimination and abuse of power and position in the workplace, then the Department of Human Resources Management,

in collaboration with other executives such as psychologists, can educate and provide employees with a insight and knowledge on the effects such behaviors have on other human beings. They must take responsibility of the training and education of employees, working towards providing everyone with a healthy working environment, that does not diminish or marginalize employees. The most important concern of the Human Resources Department is to provide employees with the opportunity to talk and refer to incidents they experience, in order to be able to help, but also to tackle behaviors that affect and underestimate employees, regardless of their level, gender or age.

6. References

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7. Appendices

Nickname	Gender	Years of duty	Rank
Peter	Male	15	Senior executive
Jennifer	Female	30	Senior executive
Kelly	Female	2	Contract soldier
Alexander	Male	3	Senior executive
Leo	Male	3	Contract soldier
Antony	Male	3,5	Contract soldier
Nick	Male	3	Contract soldier
Adams	Male	3,5	Contract soldier
Joan	Female	2	Contract soldier
Christine	Female	2	Contract soldier
Cameron	Female	2,5	Contract soldier
Emma	Female	10	Senior executive
Benjiamin	Male	3	Contract soldier
Matthew	Male	3,5	Contract soldier
Olivia	Female	2	Contract soldier
Charlotte	Female	2	Contract soldier
Jackson	Male	4	Contract soldier
Andrew	Male	20	Senior executive
Chloe	Female	7	Senior executive
Beatrice	Female	5	Senior executive

Appendix B: Semi –Interview Guide

1. For how many years have you worked in the National Guard?

2. Do you think there is gender inequality in the National Guard?

3. Have you ever experienced gender inequality / discrimination because of your gender?

> A. If yes, where did this take place?
>
> B. From whom did you experience inequality / discrimination?

4. Have you noticed gender inequalities or discrimination in your work environment? If so, in what way?

5. Do you believe that women are treated unfairly or favored in the National Guard and in what way?

6. Are there equal opportunities for advancement for both genders?

7. How do you think these inequalities could be improved (if any)?