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Female Ministers in Power in the Finnish Media

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Abstract

Gender equality is seen among the top of the world in Finland, and it allowed women the right to vote among the first countries. However, issues of gender equality are an essential topic still today in Finland. There are still gendered issues in politics, and there exist biases towards women in positions of power. Through feminism, women are fought to be seen as equal to men, but there is still room for improvement, even in Finland. Finland has a female prime minister, and most ministers in the current government are women, which is unheard of in Finland. There have not been this many women running the government in Finland before. Predominantly female-led government is not a typical situation in the world. As the situation is not common, there is not plenty of analysed data on how women in a position of power are presented and treated in the Finnish media. The current government allows studying more of these women ministers' treatment in the media. This thesis does a critical discourse analysis of news media articles of women in power in Finnish politics after December 2019, applying feminist theory as a theoretical framework for the study. The findings of the thesis indicate that women ministers, primarily the prime minister's actions, are scrutinised more strictly than men in the same position. They are more easily criticised for their decisions and especially for their mistakes. The study confirms that there is still room for improvement in gender equality in politics. Finnish government ministers receive a significant amount of online harassment, especially on Twitter, but the female ministers get the most abusive and gendered messages online. Female ministers are also more criticised about their appearance, and their qualification for their positions is more easily questioned than their male colleagues. The thesis may need further research to gain an even more in-depth analysis of bias towards women in positions of power.

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Introduction

The current government of Finland was inducted in December 2019, and Sanna Marin was appointed as the prime minister. In the cabinet of Marin, there are a total of nineteen ministers, and twelve of them are women and seven men as they were first appointed (Valtioneuvosto, 2021). This structure has a female in the highest political power position, and as most of the ministers are women, twelve out of nineteen, which is not familiar and relatively new in Finland. Women have become more equally represented in politics in Finland. In the 21st century, the gender divide between men and women as ministers is almost 50/50 (Valtioneuvosto, 2019). Thus, the government consisting of as many women as men is not entirely new in Finland.

The Finnish media is very accessible, according to the World Press Freedom Index 2021, which is compiled by Reporters Without Borders. Finland places second out of the 180 countries in the index, only behind Norway (World Press Freedom Index, 2021). The essential characteristics of Finnish media are freedom of speech, and it allows very free attacks against the government. It even encourages criticism to take place when needed in order to keep the government and everyone in power accountable for their actions. Promoting transparency and is thus, considered a good feature in the media. On the other hand, it can aid unfair attacks against people. Finnish people are avid news readers online, according to Reuters Institute Digital News Report (2020). Finnish people not only read more news than people in most other countries, but their level of trust in news is also at one of the highest levels in the world. A high level of trust emphasises the meaning of what kind of picture the media has about people, and in this case, about the women in power positions in Finland.

This thesis aims to analyse how female politicians in power positions in Finland are presented in the media. The emphasis is on analysing a bias against women based on their gender and how it becomes apparent in the media. Finland is considered to be among the top of the world in gender parity (World Economic Forum, 2020). Finland's high placement in the study suggests that gender equality is on a sound footing in Finland. However, it does not exclude that there is still room for improvement or that gender equality is ideal. The author hypothesises that female ministers are not presented or treated equally to men in the Finnish media. Women have a more challenging time receiving the same respect as the Finnish

people through media in power positions. Women are questioned more if they achieve positions of power; there are still existing underlying views that place women as a lesser option in politics in Finland. If women achieve positions of power, they are expected more, and they are questioned more. As feminism has been brought up more in politics and other areas in society, preferring men over women only based on gender has been questioned more. Women should not be excluded merely based on gender, but as this has become more acknowledged, some have started questioning if now women are getting certain positions merely because they are women. A questioning of women's exclusion from higher positions has turned out to be questioned if now women are hired without proper qualifications. As Marin was appointed as the prime minister, her entire work history was all over the media, and she was called out to have risen from cashier to the prime minister without good prior experience in politics (Laurila, 2019; Mansikka and Peltomäki, 2019). However, this was not the case, as Marin had been in politics for over ten years before becoming prime minister.

In social media, especially, speculations and attacks against politicians happen and create a commotion. Reporters Without Border (2020) mentions how Finnish media is threatened by online hate speech on social media platforms. Many users share false information and even conspiracy theories and attack the traditional media to discredit them.

The research questions are formulated in this thesis as follows:

1. How are female ministers in positions of power presented or treated differently compared to men in the same positions?
2. Why are women still seen as lesser options for political positions (especially to higher positions) than men?

Sub-questions:

1. How does the media portray female ministers in Finland?
2. How does the different presentation of female ministers compared to male ministers in the media become apparent?

The theoretical basis of the study will follow the introduction chapter. The theoretical framework consists of the feminist theory, and it is also supported by Eagly and Karau's (2002) role congruity theory. The importance of media is explained as well. The theoretical chapter is followed by research methodology, which covers the method used to analyse the

data, and the data sample is additionally explained in this chapter. After the research methodology, the author presents the empirical chapter. The empirical chapter includes the data, and it is analysed in that chapter. Following the empirical chapter, the author discusses the findings that are made in the previous chapter. In this chapter, the author also questions the research questions and provides notions about the possible shortcomings of the study. Lastly, the author provides a conclusion chapter.

1. Theoretical chapter

This chapter outlines the theoretical background of the study, which is feminist theory and role congruity theory. As the basis of this thesis is analysing the differences in attitudes towards female politicians in power based on their gender, feminist theory supports this. Feminist theory studies the nature of gender inequality and tries to examine the roles of men and women. Feminist theory gives valuable tools to gain a more in-depth understanding of why women are seen differently in political positions than men. Eagly and Karau's (2002) role congruity theory can be connected to this thesis as well. The role congruity theory studies gender roles and stereotypes. It focuses more on existing gender biases and stereotypes (Eagly and Karau, 2002). The importance of the media is also included in this theoretical basis chapter. The perspectives of why and how the media affects the Finnish people are discussed when addressing the media's importance.

1.1. Feminist theory

The feminist theory creates the theoretical basis for this study. The differences in how women in politics in Finland are represented and seen in the mainstream media compared to men is the main subject of this thesis. The feminist theory places gender issues, biases and inequality at the centre and thus help to understand the foundation of these differences. In general, feminism aims to comprehend the nature of gender inequality. Broadly, *feminism* can be defined as a movement for the social advancement of women.

Heywood (2011, p. 413) states that feminist theory is based on two central beliefs. One, women are disadvantaged because of their sex, and two, this disadvantage should be abolished. Heywood's outlook highlights the perception that this is a political relationship between the sexes, the supremacy of men and women's subjugation in most (if not all) societies. Feminism includes various approaches and areas. One way of separating different approaches to feminism is how equality is defined or how it is recognised. Heywood (2013, p. 49) explains how liberal feminism, for example, seeks to ensure that women and men

enjoy equal access to the public sphere, the right to vote, to participate in education and others. They see female subordination in terms of unequal distribution of rights and opportunities in society. Social feminism, on the other hand, focuses on the links between female subordination and the capitalist mode of production and thus draws attention to the economic significance of women being confined to domestic life.

Additionally, Heywood (2013, p.49) outlines the standard features of radical feminism. Radical feminists consider gender divisions are the most fundamental and politically relevant in society. Radical feminists argue that a sexual revolution is needed to restructure personal, domestic and family life.

Feminist theory and feminism is not a new concept, even though the term 'feminism' is relatively new. Its origins go back to ancient civilisations. Feminism is often referred to as waves when speaking about specific periods. The early form of first-wave feminism refers to mid-nineteenth century feminism. During that time, feminism was based on the pursuit of sexual equality in legal and political rights, especially suffrage rights. Second-wave feminism was developed in the 1960s and 1970s. It was seen as more radical, and the Women's Liberation Movement emerged, and it was directed to private life as well. Third-wave feminism is thought to have begun in the early 1990s by a younger generation of feminist theorists who did not feel connected to the campaigns of the second-wave feminists (Heywood, 2017). Feminist theory keeps evolving, but the main focus remains the same: gender equality.

When looking at leadership and leaders, the feminist theory provides alternative perspectives (Nelson, 2011). The feminist theory does not regard gender alone to determine if one is suitable as a leader. Good leadership qualities do not touch the subjects of gender, ethnicity or sexuality, for that matter. Men have been seen as the leaders in history, and according to Nelson (2011), the inability to perceive women as rulers is related to theories of the origin of states which have assumed, implicitly or explicitly, men as leaders. Leadership is connected to masculine terms, such as chiefs, emperors and kings. In this context, it becomes clear that it makes a difference whether gender is theorised or merely acknowledged. Nelson continues to mention that while awareness of potential women leaders in specific societies is a big step in the right direction, it is not enough to simply recognise the existence of women or even to acknowledge their potentiality as leaders. However, changing masculine terms associated

with leaders and leadership should not turn into using feminine terms. Pullen and Vachhani (2018) phrase it well, saying: “The very concept of feminine ideals of leadership becomes problematic, and the conflation of ‘humanisation’ and the ‘feminine’ only seeks to rehearse and reify narrowly defined gender differences in leadership research and practices outmoded categories of feminine and masculine leadership”. Equality for women in leadership is based on redefining a feminine symbol of leadership, and it has the potential to eliminate the disadvantage women leaders face when they are assigned to a caring position in the workplace (Pullen and Vachhani, 2018).

Feminist theory critiques other existing theories and practises and questions them. Feminism can work as a critical lens to point faults in all existing discourses, institutions and cultural practices (Snyder, 2008, p.188). It also offers new points of views for today’s problems in society. Feminism evolves and adapts to tackle current social issues in time, which has been shown, for example, as the different waves of feminism. Feminist theory can help analyse the difference between female and male ministers presentation in the Finnish media, working as a critical lens and offering new viewpoints. Because of this, the author chose feminist theory as the theoretical basis for this study.

1.2. Role Congruity Theory

Gender biases and stereotypes are closely related to feminism. Feminism places different gender biases at the centre and seeks to understand where they originate and how they can be abolished. Politics has been and still is seen as masculine and more run by men. Eagly & Karau (2002) discuss how leadership has been seen predominantly as a male prerogative in politics, military, corporate and other areas in the society. The number of females in middle-level management and supervisory positions has risen over the years, but females as elite leaders are still relatively rare (Eagly and Karau, 2002).

Role congruity theory claims that when a group’s or individual’s attributes are regarded as aligning with that group’s traditional social roles, the group or individual will be positively

assessed. According to a role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders, the perceived incongruity between the female gender role and leadership roles leads to two types of prejudice: (a) perceiving women as less qualified for leadership roles than men and (b) evaluating behaviour that fulfils the prescriptions of a leader role less favourably when performed by a woman (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Common gender stereotypes, especially in politics, are that men are aggressive and driven because they possess agentic traits. On the other hand, women are seen as overly caring and warm and not leadership material. Role congruity theory predicts that voters choose male over female candidates given the dominant masculine construal of the political role (Schneider & Bos, 2019). Eagly & Karau (2002) state in their study that small prejudices and biases, when repeated over individuals and occasions, can produce significant consequences. Meaning that biases towards women can affect the number of women in leading roles. Even microaggressions on how men are better leaders than women can decrease the number of women in leading positions.

Ritter and Yoder (2004) support role congruity theory's view that women are less likely to emerge as leaders than men when expectations for their role as leaders are incongruent with gender stereotypes. They also predict that women are more harshly evaluated than men when they assume leadership roles. Ritter and Yoder's (2004) study focuses on recognising that a broad collection of behaviours and social interactions entirely compose leadership. The pressure women leaders face once they have attained the leadership role can be depicted through their use of language. Burns et al. (2019) found evidence in their study that women leaders navigate the gender bias they face through their language to be both leader (man) and woman. Their study conducts that leadership position, especially the role of president, in language was calculated exclusively using the words male world leaders.

1.3. The importance of the media

Media has a significant role in presenting political figures, and how they are presented in the mainstream media affects people's views on them. Finnish people are avid news readers online, according to Reuters Institute Digital News Report (2020). The report also shows that

Finnish people have one of the highest levels of trust in news. Reporters Without Borders (2021) compiled a World Freedom Index, which ranks 180 countries according to their press' freedom level in the country. In the index, Finland is placed second, only after Norway. Overall, Finnish media allows and encourages free speech and encourages free speech and even attacks against the government in order to try to keep them accountable if needed. Reporters Without Borders (2021) mention that Finland's public trust in Finland's leading media outlets has increased during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A misleading headline in the media alone can change people's view of a person. The headline gives the first expression, and if it is misleading, it can affect what existing knowledge activates in the reader's head. Meaning that the choice of phrasing in a headline can influence readers' mindset as they read in order for them to recall details that coincide with what they were expecting (Konnikova, 2014). Considering this, the press's high level of trust might give considerable value to what is being said in the media.

Johnson-Myers (2021) notes how the media acts as a gatekeeper, regulating what information will be disseminated to the public and how it will be framed and presented. How women politicians are presented in the media can have noticeable consequences. The media can cultivate gender biases and promote stereotypes. Women are viewed as mild-mannered, honest, friendly and caring, whereas men are viewed as confident, more aggressive, and better leaders. Gender stereotyping in the media not only harms women's political representation in the public eye but can also deter or discourage women from running for office. The media coverage of women is also likely to portray them in harmful lights whilst using stereotypical feminine terms about them. "This is due to the media's adherence to an obsession with gender stereotypes that favour men over women, especially as it relates to the distribution of power. Even when females performed equally as well as their male counterparts, they were still perceived in a far more negative way—more quarrelsome, bitter, selfish, and more masculine than men" (Johnson-Myers, 2021, p.195). Johnson-Myers (2021) also reveals how Tuchman (1978) made arguments that media outlets do not always accurately depict women. Tuchman's arguments fueled research on the media's exclusion and trivialisation of women. These studies proved that the media generally construct politics in stereotypically masculine terms (Gidengil and Everitt 1999; Kahn 1996). Voters looking to the news media for information on whom to vote for may believe that women candidates are less electable and may be less likely to vote for these candidates if they are presented less

persuasively compared to men. “Studies on media framing of female politicians have also found that the media objectifies women by focusing on their physical appearance, character traits, family, and sexual orientation rather than issues or policies” (Johnson-Myers, 2021, p.195).

2. Research methodology

The author did this study using qualitative research methods, and more precisely, the author did the analysis part with critical discourse analysis (CDA). The study starts with outlining the theoretical basis of the thesis and then following with hypothesis, research and confirmation. Qualitative methodology and CDA, in particular, allows more in-depth observations from a smaller sample size. The timeframe for the analysis is concentrated on the time of the current government in Finland, meaning the articles used in this study were from December 2019. The selection of articles will be more thoroughly explained in the sample criteria part.

2.1. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

CDA is based on a critical theory of language that views language usage as a social activity. All social practices are linked to particular historical backgrounds and help to replicate or challenge established social ties and serve various interests (Janks, 1997). Analysing through different articles how women are portrayed in the Finnish media compared to men in the same positions is done through CDA, which analyses the language used, tautology and tone.

Using CDA allows studying how language differs in the media more extensively when speaking about men versus women. In the thesis, the aim was to use relevant news articles and analyse how the women in power in the political field are represented in the media. In general, discourse analysis is a broad term that is used for the study of language usage. It consists of various topics, linguistic patterns and rhetoric, speakers' and hearers' cognition, and language in social contexts (Siegel, 2018). CDA differs from other approaches in discourse analyses as it does not primarily aim to contribute to a specific discipline, paradigm, school or discourse theory. It is predominantly interested in pressing social issues and seeks to understand those issues better through discourse analysis (van Dijk, 1993). CDA can be used in various fields of social science. Gender inequality can be seen as a pressing social issue that can be understood better through CDA. Any kind of textual material,

documents, articles, speeches, and media texts can be used as empirical material when conducting CDA. In this study, the empirical material will consist of news articles and media texts.

According to Mullet (2018), CDA derives from several overlapping theoretical perspectives, all of which emphasise the use of linguistics, but despite the differences in focus and support, all of the CDA approaches share a set of core assumptions. “Those assumptions include an interest uncovering and transforming conditions of inequality; analyses that transcend the interpretation of language and, instead, aim to explain the work that language performs in society; and the view that standpoints, including the researcher’s, are embedded in context and are never neutral” (Mullet, 2018, p. 118).

Janks (1997) explains Fairclough’s (1989, 1995) model for conducting CDA, emphasising three interrelated processes of analysis tied to three interrelated dimensions of discourse. The dimensions are:

- (1) object of analysis, which includes verbal or visual texts;
- (2) the processes utilising which the object is produced and received (writing/speaking/designing and reading/listening/viewing) by people;
- and (3) the socio-historical conditions which govern these processes.

The different types of analysis that each of these dimensions requires in Fairclough’s model are (1) text analysis - description; (2) processing analysis - interpretation; and (3) social analysis - explanation. Fairclough’s approach allows focusing on the signifiers of the text, the particular linguistic choices and the overall layout, according to Janks (1997). Fairclough’s CDA approach suits this study, as well, as it provides multiple points of analytical entry, and interconnections can be found. Janks (1997) also mentions that it is essential to remember when conducting CDA that texts are concretisations of socially controlled discourses, with socially restricted development and reception processes. In this thesis, CDA is used to examine relations between language, discourses and social aspects; for example, in this thesis, feminism (and how women in power are portrayed) within the media.

2.2. Sample criteria

The articles used in this thesis are sampled through three specific criteria. Firstly, it is essential to establish a timeframe for this thesis. The author's chosen timeframe in this thesis is the current government period starting from December 2019. This due to the representation of women during this period is relevant. In December 2019, the new and present, when writing this thesis, the government was inducted. The prime minister, the leaders of the government parties, and twelve out of nineteen of the ministers are women, which gives the author more data to analyse as there is a relevant number of women in positions of political power. As the sample size consists of more than one or two people, it makes the study more significant and does not give too much relevance to one specific person, thus giving a better understanding of how women are presented in a political role that holds power in the media.

Secondly, the content of the articles need to involve a female political figure who is in a position of more power than most in the Finnish government, and they need to be women, as the thesis analyses women in power in politics. The author decided to include the president, prime minister and other ministers, and party leaders of the government parties. However, in Finland, the president is not a woman at the time of writing this thesis, which excludes the position of the president from the data sample. The Prime minister and other ministers of the government hold more power politically in Finland when compared to other politicians.

Thirdly, the article has created some controversy or much attention in the media. A lot of comments or overall discussion in the media. The news articles used in the sample are published in newspapers which are considered part of Finland's mainstream media. The articles were compiled from the publishers' online websites Helsingin Sanomat, Iltalehti, Iltta-Sanomat, Yle Uutiset and Mtv Uutiset are all included in this.

In the 21st century, the gender divide in the ministers has been almost 50/50 in Finland (Valtioneuvosto, 2021). A balanced divide between men and women reveals that women are not entirely underrepresented in politics in Finland today. Finland's current president is not female, but the prime minister and government party leaders make the selection relevant. There has only been one female president in Finland, and three out of 46 prime ministers Finland has had, were only women. Out of these three female prime ministers, nobody has

served a full term of four years. However, it needs to be noted that after 2007 none of the prime ministers has served a full term in Finland. In the 21st century, Finland has had a good representation of women in the government and as ministers; thus, the author included ministers in the sample. The inclusion of ministers in the sample is relevant since otherwise, the sample would only be one person without the female ministers inside the chosen timeframe.

3. Empirical chapter

This chapter aims to analyse the data used in the study. The empirical chapter concentrates on analysing the articles used in the research and seeing how the women in power, in politics, are presented in the media. The author will discuss what is in the articles and studies the text and its relation to social context. It is relevant to mention that the prime minister's actions in Finland are the most critiqued as they have the most political power in Finland. Also, this makes the prime minister more covered in the media than other ministers, for example. In Finland, the media allows and encourages free speech. Finnish people are also avid news readers (Reuters, 2020), which give coverage to many online news sites like Iltalehti, Iltä-Sanomat, Yle Uutiset, Helsingin Sanomat and other popular online news sources. Iltalehti is one of the most read news sources online in Finland, and its reader base has grown in recent years even more. According to National media research, in Finland, Iltalehti reaches approximately 2,34 million people monthly, making it the second-largest news source after Iltä-Sanomat, which reaches 3,7 million people in January 2019 (Virta, 2019).

3.1. Experience and competence

Female politicians are more easily questioned about their competence for their role if it holds more power than a regular member of parliament position. Marin was appointed as the prime minister of Finland in December 2019. As soon as Marin was appointed, Iltalehti wrote in their printed paper about Marin's "enormous" rise from being a cashier to the prime minister in December 2019. The headline created much commentary on Twitter and overall on the media. Mansikka and Peltomäki (2019) addressed the controversy in Helsingin Sanomat and included the picture of the headline in their article. The front-page headline in Iltalehti paper said: "An incredible rise from a CASHIER to the top of Finland" ("Huikea nousu KAUPAN KASSALTA Suomen huipulle"). The headline is very loaded, and the emphasis is entirely on the word cashier, as only that word is written in capital letters. It can make some readers think that Marin went almost straight from a sales worker to the prime minister, which was not the

case. It diminishes Marin's previous work history in politics. It also diminishes a cashier's job altogether; it gives an impression that it is not an essential job in society.

It does not seem relevant to raise in the news and media politicians, even prime minister's or the president's former jobs if the job is non-related to their current position and from over ten years ago. If they already have a steady career in politics before their new role as the prime minister or the president, it seems irrelevant to bring up. With Marin, this was the case. She had worked as a cashier at a younger age before she started to make a career in politics. Nevertheless, before she became the prime minister, she had worked in politics for years. She started in the youth organisation of the Social Democratic Party of Finland (SDP) and after Marin has been a councilwoman in the city council of Tampere, as well as in many other positions of responsibility for the city of Tampere, member of the Parliament and lastly became the prime minister (Ansioluettelo Sanna Marin, 2019). Marin has a decade worth of experience in politics and has been in highly trusted positions. Ensuring that she has enough experience in politics and is competent for the position, it is seen as irrelevant in the reader's eyes when it is only mentioned that she has been a cashier.

Marin is the youngest named prime minister to be appointed in Finland as she was 34 years old (Valtioneuvosto, 2019). It is also seen as a young age when appointed to the prime minister in other countries, as often prime ministers are older. Marin's age can also be seen as a factor in why she has been called unqualified and not experienced enough for the role. However, Jyrki Katainen, who was Finland's prime minister from 2011-2014, was 39 when he was appointed. He was relatively young and not much older than Marin, but his suitability was not highly questioned, nor was his past job as a cashier brought up in the media (Mansikka and Peltomäki, 2019). Marin's rise from a cashier to the prime minister was seen as significant, and Katainen's was not; it could be interpreted that it has something to do with gender. It could indicate that women's rise is presented in the media as a more considerable achievement and more unconventional than men's in the same circumstances.

There were comments outside of Finland as well about Marin's former job as a cashier. For example, Estonia's former but at the time of the incident, the minister of interior Mart Helme questioned Marin's experience and abilities to work as a prime minister on an Estonian radio. Helme also talked about Marin's former job as a cashier and bashed Marin's government at the same, how another street activist has become a member of the Parliament (Kokkonen,

2019). The data can indicate here that Marin's education and appropriate qualification for the role of prime minister is undermined by emphasising one of her first job positions as a cashier. In this case, it is highlighted for the reader that Marin rose from cashier to prime minister and might give an expression that she went almost straight from cashier to her position as the prime minister.

3.2. Appearance

Women are more judged about their appearance than men, and they are more scrutinised about their clothing choices regardless of their position in society. However, this is even more emphasised the more influential the position is. Finland's prime minister Sanna Marin was pictured in Finnish magazine "Trendi", which covers fashion, beauty, trends, well-being and lifestyle. This article in "Trendi" magazine produced multiple news articles in the media. For example, in Iltalehti, Tuominen (2020) brings out Marin's feelings about the picture. The picture is Marin wearing a black blazer jacket, showing a little cleavage, for the necklace, which she is wearing to show. The commotion around the picture was due to the shown cleavage in the picture. The headline in Tuominen (2020) article, translated, was "Sanna Marin opens up about her hard feelings in Trendi magazine - the picture choice stunned: Gorgeous prime minister". The headline already gives an impression that the picture was surprising and bold. In the article (Tuominen, 2020), Marin brings up her awareness of knowing that women's appearance is always a topic and aims to look the same. As Marin mentions that she tries to look the same, she not only recognises the scrutiny that women are under in the media about the way they dress, but Marin also tries to give as little as possible for the media to hold onto when it comes to the way she dresses (Tuominen, 2020).

Many readers and commenters judged this to be "unprofessional", "not suitable for a prime minister", "is this feminism", "she should do her job instead", "how does she has time for this", "meanwhile the Finnish people are suffering from COVID-19..." and many other comments were written in different comment sections (Tuominen, 2020; Taleva, 2020). Not all of the comments were negative, condescending or attacking Marin for being in the picture.

Overall, there were many comments in these two articles about the picture over 400 (Tuominen, 2020) and over 900 (Taleva, 2020) comments. These comments bring out their opinions on how they see a prime minister should present themselves, and showing a little cleavage is deemed inappropriate for a female prime minister.

The picture of Marin is not entirely out of character for her. She has often been seen wearing different Finnish fashion brands and been pictured wearing them (Taleva, 2020). Thus, this picture can be seen going with the same category, as Marin is wearing a Kalevala (Finnish jewellery brand) necklace, and it is at the centre of the picture. Meaning, this picture was nothing atypical for Marin, who is precise about her public moves and appearance. The commentary the picture received indicates that Marin's picture in "Trendi" magazine was not mainly seen as an acceptable performance from the prime minister.

Marin's picture created quite a controversy in the media. This situation can also be viewed as unequal towards women when looking at men in the same position in Finland. In 2018, Juha Sipilä was the prime minister in Finland, and he was pictured shirtless in a sauna with another famous tv personality, but this picture did not create nearly as much hate or controversy as Marin's picture. Both Sipilä and Marin were prime ministers at the time their pictures were published in the media. The different outcomes in these two cases support feminist theory's view about gender biases and how they are still relevant. Both Marin and Sipilä, being in the same position, ought to be expected to act and similarly present themselves, receiving similar commentary in the media regardless of their gender. Their input and actions as a prime minister need to be criticised and kept in check if needed, but what kind of pictures they publish in the media or social media does not directly correlate to their ability to succeed as prime minister. However, it affects how the public sees them. There have also been multiple shirtless pictures in the media about Teuvo Hakkarainen, a member of the European Parliament (MEP) (Ylimutka, 2015). However, even his pictures have not created as much controversy as Marin's one picture. As an MEP, Hakkarainen presents Finland, and it is considered as a highly public role. There is a clear bias based on gender, as seen in these examples in Finnish media and society.

3.3. Stereotypes and what is expected?

In politics, women are not seen as the ones that play the game and have the same desire for power as men. This can be taken as one of the various examples of the gender stereotypes in politics and Junkkari (2020) wrote an article in Helsingin Sanomat about Krista Kiuru, the minister of family affairs and social services in Finland. The title of the article was “Master of the game” (“Pelin taitaja”). There is also an illustrated picture of Kiuru sitting on a chair that looks like the Finnish parliament house, and she is holding playing cards in her hands. The title and the picture are solid references that Kiuru is a formidable politician and a player. The rest of the article is in line with this. Kiuru is pictured as a demanding user of power; she does not give up and does everything she can to get her way. These are all characteristics that are stereotypically seen and framed as one is that men have in politics.

Moreover, as Kiuru is a woman, it may raise more attention, as women are not seen as aggressive and power-driven but relatively mild-mannered and friendly. Women are not expected to be selfish and go after power, as men are. Junkkari (2020) even refers Kiuru to Paavo Väyrynen (a former member of Parliament in Finland) and calls that Kiuru’s level of playing in Finland has only reached Väyrynen besides her. Väyrynen is known in Finland as an aggressive and willing politician to do almost anything to get what he wants. Junkkari (2020) also speaks about how women politicians face criticism based on their gender: “How Kiuru’s actions continue to be criticised may be due to her gender. Female politicians are not accepted with the same desire and aspiration for power as men”. The inequality between men and women can still be seen in politics in Finland.

Ripaoja and Turunen (2019) mention that the ombudsman for equality in Finland informed on Twitter that they received many contact requests regarding the composition of the current government, which might violate the law of equality. When Marin was appointed as the prime minister, and the government was formed, the government consisted of five parties: the Social Democrat Party (SDP), Centre Party (Keskusta), Green Party (Vihreät), the Left Alliance (Vasemmisto) and Swedish People’s Party of Finland (RKP). All of these parties were in December 2019 and still are led by women. This is an unseen situation in Finland, and it is rare when looking at the world. In an article in Ilta-Sanomat (Ripaoja and Turunen, 2019), the gender distribution in the government was brought up as there were all-female

party leaders in the government parties and twelve ministers out of nineteen in the government were women altogether. The ombudsman for equality received three contact requests regarding the composition of the government. Three contact requests are not much, but as the ombudsman for equality has not received contacts about this matter ever before, it is relevant to notice. In the previous government, eleven out of nineteen ministers were women, and in the one before that, there were eleven men and five women as ministers. The change from the preceding government is not significant, but the gender distribution was not questioned then. The ombudsman for equality confirmed that the law of equality was not broken in the forming of the government, as the parties themselves choose their own minister elects. The article brings out how the government's equality is more easily and quickly questioned when women are the majority in the leading roles. It also shows that it is not something that people are used to, as it is most of the time the other way around. The ombudsman for equality revealed that the contacts came from private persons who were men (Ripaoja and Turunen, 2019).

In Finland, more men than women in the government have been a standard, and for a long time, it was not widely questioned. Feminist theory questions pre-existing standards and structures. It not only challenges the preceding views and discourse in the society but also offers new perspectives (Snyder, 2008, p.188). Feminism can also affect the way women are seen in politics. The feminist theory challenges male dominance in politics and tries to equal the male and female power in politics (Sabbarwal, 2000). Ripaoja and Turunen (2019) display a visual presentation of the number of women and men as ministers in all of the past governments. The visualisation shows that the number of women ministers has slowly risen over the years, but only after the year 2003, the gender divide has reached a more even split between men and women. However, Marin's government is not the first government that has more female ministers than male ministers. As mentioned earlier in Antti Rinne's government, there were more females as ministers than men, eleven female ministers and eight male ministers, but there was no controversy about gender equality in the government (Ripaoja and Turunen, 2019). The prime minister was a man at the time, which could be associated with why it was seen as a similar situation regarding gender.

The difference towards women in power positions can be seen in the names that have been given to the current coalition government: "lipstick brigade", "girl government", and "pantyhose government" are all names that have been floating in the media and especially

comment sections (Ripaoja and Turunen, 2019; Startcom, 2020). Ripaoja and Turunen (2019) also mention some of these names, and doing so is bringing more attention to how differently people see the current government from the past governments. Perhaps as a government with more women than men, which is a relatively new concept and still rarely seen, it is more likely to be criticised, and their failures are reasoned by having a women majority more easily. This shows the inequality women face; the media does not name government's that are mainly composed of men in different names.

3.4. Women are allowed fewer mistakes?

Katri Kulmuni was the leader of the Centre Party in Finland (Keskusta) between 2019-2020, and she was the minister of finance in Marin's government until June 2020. Happonen (2020) wrote an article in Yle about Kulmuni's scandal, where she had two different ministry departments pay her media training (50 000€). The Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Employment and the Economy bought media training for Kulmuni, and as the sum was huge, it caused a scandal in the media. Shortly after the commotion started, Kulmuni released a statement saying that she will pay the training back to the ministries herself (Happonen, 2020).

As the news about Kulmuni's media training bill came out, it created controversy in the media. It was questioned in the media that Kulmuni's political party, Centre Party, should have paid for the training and if the training bill was too much. Also, the timing of the media training was questioned, as, at the time of the training, Kulmuni was running to lead the Centre Party (Happonen, 2020). However, this created much controversy, even though Kulmuni was not accused of any wrongdoing officially. Mannermaa (2020) mentions that the government's internal rule is that all buy's that exceed 20 000€ should be put out to tender, but this did not happen in Kulmuni's case.

As Kulmuni resigned from her position of minister of finance shortly after the questionable media training commotion, it raised a question of whether a man in the same position would

have had to resign as well (Havula, 2020). Kulmuni was not legally held responsible, and it was surprising that Kulmuni offered to pay for the training back herself. This made people wonder if the mistake was so bad that she needed to resign. As many people wondered this on Twitter (Biaudet, 2020) especially, it shows that Finland people question if the politicians are treated equally or do gender still matter in politics. Havula (2020) also mentions that if Kulmuni had been a man, the Centre Party would have backed her up more. Mistakes that women make are looked more into than men's. Nevertheless, there was a tremendous amount of backlash about making this "a question about gender" and that it would not have been acceptable whether she would have been a woman or a man. The discussion that this scandal raised can indicate that politics are somewhat gendered in Finland.

3.5. Personal life

As a politician, one is in a public role, and it is hard to keep their personal lives completely a secret. However, it does not ethically mean that all aspects of one's personal life should be all over the media if they have nothing to do with one's career as a politician. Marin has been very open about her personal life and relationship, or the lack of it, with her father. Palomäki (2020) mentions in an article in *Iltalehti* how Marin shared her relationship with her father and that it is nonexistent. She even stated that she has no father as she did not grow up with him. The article created controversy and negative comments in the media. People were saying how it can be seen that she grew up without a father, and others were doubting her skills to run Finland if she cannot keep a relationship with her father. Some were even saying how Marin has no heart as she has shut her father out of her life. Many of the comments under Palomäki's (2020) article in *Iltalehti* were thoroughly targeted against Marin; there were over 500 comments. The comments included abusive, demeaning and attacking messages, such as "and Finland does not have a prime minister", "you can tell she does not have a father", "she is a cold person", "shows her insensibility" and "Sanna is a freak".

3.6. Abusive and gendered comments

NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence (Stratcom) conducted a study: “Abuse of power: Coordinated online harassment of Finnish Government Ministers” (2021). The report was based on data collected from March to July 2020 and published in 2021. Stenroos and Kokkonen (2021) mention the outcomes of the study and how hate speech has increased. Using Stratcom’s (2021) definition of hate speech: hate speech is a collection of overlapping terms that include hostile and abusive language, cyberbullying and is the most regularly used phrase for defining the phenomenon of offending user-generated content. Broadly defined, hate speech is any communication used to target a person or a group on the basis of a particular trait such as gender, race, nationality or sexual orientation, among other characteristics.

The Stratcom (2021) study found that abusive language against Finnish government ministers is a common occurrence, even an exceptional amount of hate speech. The extent to which female ministers received abusive language against them was much more compared to male ministers. Female politicians received gendered, misogynistic and sexist abuse online. The five ministers who were targeted the most were all women, and the misogynistic messages questioned their values and decision-making and leadership skills (Stratcom, 2021). “Gendered abuse was used to criticise and delegitimise women in ministerial positions no matter the political topic of the moment, be it the Finnish government’s COVID-19 response, its immigration policy, or its involvement in EU affairs” (Stratcom, 2021, p. 57). This indicates that it does not matter what topic the government has been working on, and more precisely the government that Marin and other female ministers have led. Female ministers will still receive a preposterous amount of abusive and gendered messages online.

Stenroos and Kokkonen (2021) mention Marin’s tweet in the article about the study. The tweet also says, “Women run the government, get over it” (Marin, 2021). This tweet could indicate Marin’s confidence and detachment from what she and the women ministers have had to deal with in their position just because they are women. Marin’s tweet (2021) got over two thousand comments, and the comment section proved the study’s outcome. The comments on the tweet were merely proving the Stratcom (2021) study’s outcome to be accurate. The comments included abusive and gendered language. There were misogynistic

comments and commenters calling out Marin to be playing the victim as she posted about the study. People in the comments also questioned the integrity of the study, as it was revealed that the prime minister's office had requested the study themselves. However, the request was made in 2019 while Juha Sipilä was the prime minister, and the initial research topic requested was meant to be on the attempts to affect elections, but Stratcom decided to change the topic in the Spring of 2020 to hate speech, according to Stenroos and Kokkonen (2021). This shows that Stratcom changed the topic to one that they deemed more relevant at the time, and Marin's government had nothing to do with it.

Abusive language based only on gender shows that men and women are not seen as equal in that position or field. It derives from the view that not everyone in society sees women as suitable for a position of power as men are. Stratcom (2021) also mentioned in the report that the hate comments came from real people, not from bot accounts. Even if the accounts could be fake, the study revealed that there are real people who write them. The study also revealed that over half of the abusive messages came from anonymous accounts. Anonymity lowers the threshold to write abusive messages online and makes it harder for anyone to keep the anonymous writer accountable (Stratcom, 2021). Stratcom (2021) concluded in their study that as online hate speech has become more frequent, it causes a threat to Finnish democracy. The complex relationship between freedom of speech and the protection of abusive messaging and hate speech has been recognised as a sociopolitical issue.

The gendered comments have also come up in the names that the government has received, as being all female-led. As mentioned earlier, in the media, there have been several names for the current government, such as "lipstick brigade", "pantyhose government", and "girl government", the names are belittling. The "girl government" is not only meant to insult the fact that they are all women but also their relatively young mean age in the government (Luukka, 2019). Nalbantoglu (2019) wrote how "the power is now with women in their thirties: the government is run by five women of which four are under 35" in Helsingin Sanomat. They are rather young compared to previous government's in Finland, and they are all women, which is historical in Finland (Luukka, 2019). These are two things that are not considered norms in politics and thus have created controversy. Young people are not generally seen as interested in politics as the older, and the younger generation's polling turnout is not as high as the older generation's in Finland, according to Luukka (2019). However, in the 21st century, there are more younger people elected in the government, and

the political power has shifted more to the younger generation. Nevertheless, younger people still need older people's votes to get elected, as the more significant proportion of the voters is part of the older generation (Luukka, 2019).

4. Findings

This chapter compiles the main findings that were made in the previous empirical chapter, and this chapter answers whether the hypothesis was proved to be correct. Research questions are answered simultaneously in this findings chapter as well.

The research goal in this study was to analyse how female ministers in power positions are presented in the Finnish media. This study indicates that female ministers in power, and especially the prime minister, are under relatively high scrutiny in the media. There were some indications in the data that show differences between male and female minister's presentations in the Finnish media.

The main finding made in this thesis was that the number of coordinated online harassment the Finnish government ministers receive is exceptional, and especially that female ministers are the ones who receive the most hate speech online (Stratcom, 2021). According to Stratcom (2021), female ministers received not only more abusive but gendered and sexist messages online. Most of the abusive messages were found on Twitter; many of the abusive tweets included gendered expletives, such as "b*tch", "whore", and "slut", among other female degrading terms. Female ministers were targeted with these terms solely based on their identities as women (Stratcom, 2021). Stratcom's (2021) study also found out that over half of the messages were sent by anonymous accounts, which is concerning as anonymity erases accountability. Less accountability can lead to more abusive unfiltered messages towards individuals. The messages also came from real accounts, not bot-like accounts, which means that the messages analysed in the study were real, not automated. Online harassment against female ministers, who are targeted with gendered name-calling and expletives, knows no boundaries and is prevalent in Finland (Stratcom, 2021). The various abusive and gendered language can indicate that men and women are not seen completely equal in political positions. It might derive from the view that not everyone in society sees women as suitable for a position of power as men are.

Finnish people have high trust in the press (Reporters Without Borders, 2019), and that, together with anonymous hate speech that is not easily traced back to the original writer, is dangerous. Not only does this lower the threshold to write abusive messages online, but it can

also magnify the level of abusiveness and rudeness, as they are most likely to avoid being held accountable. Finnish people's trust in the press is also relatively high (Reporters Without Borders, 2019), which, attached to this as well, can become counterproductive to a person who does not have excellent media literacy. The media has an essential effect on people, and it can affect their opinions, especially about public figures like ministers. Gender biases and prejudices may be fostered by the media (Johnson-Myers, 2021). Gender stereotypes can come out in different ways in the media. Common features stereotypically seen for women are mild-mannered, honest, friendly and caring, whereas men are viewed as confident, more aggressive, and better leaders (Johnson-Myers, 2021). If gender stereotypes are particularly present in the media, it might grow inequality between men and women. A single misleading headline in the media can drastically alter people's perceptions of an individual. The headline is the first word, and if it is deceptive, it will influence what existing information in the reader's mind is enabled.

The number of comments in the articles and tweets used in this thesis was somewhat high, and the articles created discussion and controversy, 565 comments (Palomäki, 2020), 904 comments (Taleva, 2020), 420 comments (Havula, 2019), and Marin's tweet (2021) receiving over 1900 comments. In these comment sections, abusive and hateful comments were found such as "she is a cold person", "Sanna is a freak", "lipstick brigade", "girl government", "pantyhose government", "unprofessional", "not suitable for a prime minister", "is this feminism", "she should do her job instead", "how does she has time for this", and "meanwhile the Finnish people are suffering from COVID-19...". The spectrum of the hateful and criticising comments was comprehensive.

Women are under tighter scrutiny of their actions as ministers. The way women represent themselves in the media is more criticised than men. What is acceptable for women to wear is more tightly followed and critiqued than men. Marin's picture in "Trendi" magazine was highly deemed inappropriate because she wore a black blazer jacket and showed a little more cleavage than what is typically expected of a female in a highly public role. The picture could be seen as a typical fashion picture. A former prime minister of Finland, Juha Sipilä, was pictured in a more revealing setting, entirely without a shirt, during the time of his prime minister period, but it did not create controversy in the media. This could indicate gender bias against women. Women are expected more than men in the same position.

Unequal expectations from a woman prime minister become apparent when the media focuses notably on her work history. Marin's former work position as a cashier became the major headline in the media when she was appointed as the prime minister. Marin's over decade long political career did not matter as much as her competence was questioned for the role of prime minister. Other previous prime ministers had had jobs as a cashier or other ordinary jobs when they were young, like Marin, but their rise to the prime minister was not covered in the media the same way. Marin's former job as a cashier was even commented on internationally when Estonia's former minister of interior Mart Helme commented that he questions if Finland's government can pursue their interests after Marin's government was appointed (Kokkonen, 2019). This is another example of how women are presented differently in the media. Nevertheless, the other articles analysed as well showed similar outcomes.

Katri Kulmuni ended up resigning from her position as the minister of finance due to the scandal around her 50 000€ media training. Two different ministries paid off the training, and it caused an outrage in the media. The sum of the training was more than usually provided training for ministers, which was why this blew up in the media. However, after Kulmuni resigned from her minister position, it was questioned in the media by some people if the consequences would have been the same if Kulmuni was a man (Biaudet, 2020). Even though Kulmuni announced that she would cover the costs of her media training back to the government, it was not enough for the public and media to forgive her, which eventually led to her voluntary resignation (Havula, 2020). Kulmuni's almost immediate resignation could indicate that females are not allowed as many or as big mistakes as ministers as their male colleagues.

Marin's predominantly female government has been widely mentioned in the media, in and outside of Finland. Female as the prime minister and twelve out of nineteen ministers are females, and it is not a common sight in Finnish history. Marin is the third female prime minister in Finland. The ombudsman for equality received complaints regarding the gender divide in Marin's government - it was not seen to be in line with the law of equality. However, the government parties appoint their own minister elects, meaning that the political parties themselves are responsible for who can become a minister and who cannot. Thus, the law of equality was not officially broken. The ombudsman for equality also stated in the article that in the past, governments had not received contact requests regarding this topic.

This indicates that gender equality could be more easily questioned if there are more women than men. As Marin's government is predominantly female, there are various names in the media for the government. Such as previously in this chapter mentioned, "lipstick brigade" and "girl government", which are not only gendered terms but also demeaning.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, the empirical chapter analysed the news articles through critical discourse analysis. The language used in the articles in-depth; linguistic patterns, the readers' cognition and the text overall in touch with social contexts. Gender inequality is a pressing social issue that can be better understood through CDA, and that is what the author attempted to do. Women are more likely to face questioning and criticism when they are in a position of power compared to men. Women are also, even expected, more to prove that they are competent for their role and to receive more abusive gendered messages online.

The data analysed in this thesis showed different examples of how women are treated and presented differently compared to their male colleagues in the Finnish media. Female ministers, especially the prime minister, receive more abusive and gendered messages compared to men. Also, the amount of hate speech in Finnish social media is substantial. Women's qualification for roles that hold more power is more quickly and more often questioned. In a country such as Finland, which is considered at the top of the world in gender parity (World Economic Forum, 2020), questioning and criticising politicians would be based on their performance and actions in their position, not their gender. However, this study showed that this is often not the case, and there is still room for improvement in how women in positions of political power are seen and treated in the Finnish media.

A government that consists predominantly of female ministers could be seen as unequal more easily than a government that is predominantly of men. However, this study does not provide that much data to be sure. This thesis merely scratches the surface of how female ministers in power are presented in the Finnish media. There were many ways how the inequality female ministers face was pointed out in the study. Women's appearances were commented on and criticised noticeably. Articles about the prime minister's picture in "Trendi" magazine were heavily commented on. They received hundreds of comments judging on what is acceptable clothing for the prime minister to wear and should the prime minister have been in the interview in the first place is. Female ministers are assessed thoroughly in the media to see if they are suitable and qualified for their role. Marin's career in politics that has lasted over ten years was cast aside by one of her first jobs as a cashier. There were indications in the data that women might not be allowed to make as many mistakes as their male counterparts, but it

could not have been proved to be true with the existing data. However, the biggest finding in the study was that female ministers receive a remarkable amount of gendered and abusive messages online. Stratcom's (2021) study on coordinated online harassment of Finnish government ministers showed that targeting of Finnish government ministers with abusive language online is repeating occurrences. Their study also showed that female ministers were getting most of the abusive and even sexist messages. Five of the most abusive messages receiving ministers were women (Stratcom, 2021). All of these findings together demonstrate how differently women in power positions are treated and presented in the Finnish media.

For future studies on this subject, the shortcomings of this thesis could be taken into consideration. As the number of women in power in politics is relatively low in Finland, especially when looking at the role of the president and the prime minister, there are not many people to analyse. The more influential the position is, the more their actions are followed and under scrutiny. This could allow comparative analysis between all three previous and the current female prime ministers and the former president of Finland, Tarja Halonen. These four women could be analysed and compared together if and how their presentation differs in the Finnish media. This would give better insight into the gender bias and stereotypes of female ministers in power in the media. Another viewpoint for the future is conducting a similar study after this government period is over. As Marin's government is still in force as of the writing of this thesis, the views towards women in power can change, drastically even, whilst following and collecting data until the end of their government period. This could allow making more findings, and the hypothesis of this study could possibly be supported as well.

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