



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Recruitment practices

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Abstract

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<p>The correct tools and practices to benefit from a continuously diversifying pool of candidates will help organisations keep a competitive edge. While also benefiting society by encouraging people from all walks of life to apply for positions best suited to their knowledge and skillset, ultimately becoming more significant contributors to an ageing Finnish population.</p> <p>The objective of this thesis is to give the reader an understanding of what diversity, equity, and inclusion are, why they are essential in recruitment practices and concrete ways to create a more inclusive working environment in which all employees have a sense of belonging and safety. In addition, this thesis aims to give the reader an understanding of the seven stages of recruitment and an awareness of the current state of discrimination in the Finnish labour market.</p> <p>This thesis's theoretical framework outlines the seven stages of recruitment and describes diversity, equity, and inclusion. Discrimination in recruitment and recruiting tools are also explained, with a final section on tools for organisations.</p> <p>The thesis is research-based, using mixed quantitative and qualitative research methods. Interviews were conducted with 2 Talent Acquisition specialists employed in the information technology industry. A survey was conducted with 43 respondents. The research analysis found that most non-Finnish respondents had faced discrimination in one or more of the seven stages of recruitment. A limitation of the topic was the small sample size for the research.</p>
Keywords Recruitment, diversity, equity, inclusion, bias

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1 Introduction

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are three essential pillars of a good workplace. Diversity is the presence of people from varying backgrounds, races, genders, sexual orientations, belief systems, disabilities, and ages. Equity is the presence of tools and processes that ensure fair practises. Inclusion is an environment where all are supported and able to make a difference within an organisation.

The main objective of this thesis is to give the reader an understanding of what diversity, equity and inclusion are and why they are essential in recruitment practices. To support the reader's implementation of DEI practices in recruitment, the seven stages of recruitment are explained, and insight is given into the discrimination that minority groups face in the recruitment practices of Finland.

As the world globalises and Finland's population ages and grows, having the skills to source foreign candidates and ensure their long-term growth and employee well-being is an asset to all organisations, large and small. Employers will find more and more applicants who appreciate DEI practices across an organisation, and employer branding is positively affected by the presence of diverse employees.

Interviews with 2 Talent Acquisition specialists and a survey with 43 respondents were conducted to support DEI practices, which will be studied in the research and analysis sections. The survey was conducted on Webropol, a survey and reporting tool. The survey respondents all lived in Finland and were from 9 different countries. The respondents' English and Finnish language proficiency varied, and the majority were female between the ages of 25 and 34.

Finally, a conclusive section with a discussion from the author. Through the interviews and survey section, the reader will be given the perspective of the Talent Acquisition specialists and the candidate. With an in-depth analysis of both qualitative and quantitative research.

DEI imbeds in employees not only a sense of belonging but results in ambitious and creative solutions that would otherwise not be possible. At its best, these elements ensure a happy, productive working culture and allow an organisation to keep a competitive advantage in today's fast past business environment.

The author used Harvard – Cite Them right reference style and Zotero, a reference management tool, for the references.

2 Theoretical framework

In all aspects of the employee life cycle, it is necessary to include DEI practices. Recruitment is no exception. Each candidate should go through the same recruitment process. Having multiple recruiters review, a candidate will allow for different perspectives and a fairer recruitment process. The seven stages of recruitment are demonstrated in Figure 1.

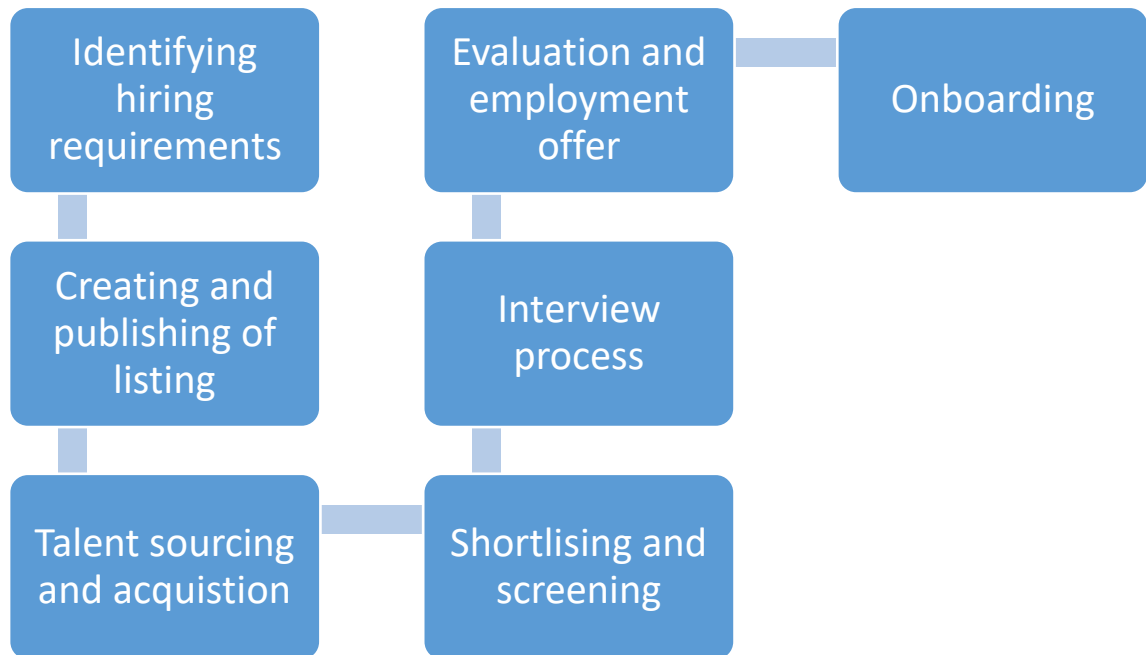


Figure 1. The Seven Stages of Recruitment (consolidated by author)

Without bias, there would be no need for DEI practices. Acknowledging and understanding bias in recruiting is a helpful tool for creating inclusive practices within the field. These stages, terms and definitions are explored in this section. (Pavlou, 2019.)

2.1 Seven stages of recruitment

The following are the seven stages of recruitment with brief descriptions. An organisation should utilise these stages not only to recruit an ideal candidate successfully but also to ensure long-term learning and development, employee satisfaction and a good fit for both employer and candidate.

Identifying hiring requirements

Once a job becomes available, the hiring requirements must be identified. Depending on the role and organisation, the conditions are often outlined by a recruiter and the hiring manager in charge of the position. The requirements highlight the responsibilities of the

work and the requirements of filling the position. Requirements include both hard and soft skills. (*How to Conduct the Recruitment Process: 7 Stages of Hiring*, 2021.)

Hard skills are often learned through teaching and can include, for example, education and language skills. Soft skills are self-developed and can consist of, for example, the ability to work well in a team, enthusiasm and being hard-working. Both hard and soft skills mentioned give a candidate a good idea of the requirements, and both should hold equal importance in recruiting new employees. (Cheary, 2016.)

Creating and publishing of job description

After the hiring requirements have been identified, the next stage is to create and publish the listing. The listing should include the name of the position, a description of the role, and required hard and soft skills. It is estimated that the average job seeker spends 3-5 minutes reading a job description. Because of this, it is essential to make the information clear, to the point and attractive to the reader. Compensation and benefits should also be included in the job description. (Indeed.com, 2022.)

Using growth-mindset language and mentioning commitment to diversity and inclusion will make the description more appealing to a candidate. The job description should be published on relevant platforms to the organisation and the role in question. Platforms like LinkedIn are popular tools for both candidates and recruiters. (Indeed.com, 2022.)

Talent sourcing and acquisition

Talent or candidate sourcing is advertising a listing to reach a wider candidate pool and contact passive candidates. Passive candidates are suited candidates that would not have otherwise applied for the vacant position. Talent sourcing is used for difficult-to-fill positions, which are often highly specialised and senior-level positions. In addition to sourcing, this stage includes acquisition. (Morris, 2022.)

Talent acquisition goes beyond recruiting an ideal candidate. It involves understanding not only what it takes to fill a position but also understanding and analysis of different business needs once the candidate is onboarded. These include:

- Alignment of the candidates and hiring organisations goals
- Learning and development strategies
- Long-term retention and overall employee satisfaction and well-being. (Bailey *et al.*, 2018, 212–213.)

Shortlisting and screening

Shortlisting is creating a short list of candidates from all those who applied for a position. These candidates will go on to the next stage of recruitment. When shortlisting candidates having a list of requirements for the candidates is essential. These requirements should align with the hard and soft skills mentioned in stage one, Identifying hiring requirements. Specific software is a helpful tool when shortlisting and can be used when screening applications for hard skills. (Morris, 2022.)

However, identifying soft skills is more time-consuming and requires reading through applications. Sometimes, a candidate assignment is given to determine the skills necessary for the position. Using a point system where candidates are given points for each required skill will help refine the overall pool and create a shortlist. (Morris, 2022.)

Interview process

The shortlisted candidates are invited to an interview. During the interview, candidates are asked a series of questions. Questions are prepared ahead of time; follow-up questions are also asked depending on responses given by the candidate. They are asked about their knowledge of the organisation and the skills required for the position. In addition, the candidate is given a more in-depth view of the company culture and what kinds of tasks to expect if hired. (Indeed.com, 2021.)

The interview is the time for both the candidate and the recruiter to tentatively determine whether the candidate would suit the position and make an excellent addition to the organisation. (Indeed.com, 2021.)

Evaluation and employment agreement

After the interview process, select the candidate to fill the position. Commonly the selection process will be centred around the hiring requirements and the hard and soft skills mentioned in the previous stages. As well as how well the candidate performed in the interview. (Morris, 2022.)

When a selection is made, the candidate is informed and sent an employment offer. If the candidate accepts the employment offer, they are sent an employment agreement, which should include the following:

- The employee's name, social security number and address
- The organisation's name, business ID, and address
- Validity
- Working hours
- Responsibilities of the position

- Salary and the date on which salaries are paid
- Annual leave
- Notice
- Date and signature. (Duunitori, 2019.)

The recruitment team should also inform those not selected of their decision and keep in mind candidates that made a good impression for future positions.

Onboarding

Employee onboarding is a process in which employees are introduced to their working environment, colleagues, and tasks. New employees can meet with their colleagues and management during this time. This should include both organised sessions by the company for the new employee and material for self-study. (Maurer, 2021.)

The sessions should be on the organisation's culture, software, and functions. Onboarding is also an opportunity to get to know the offices and the physical surroundings and receive, for example, a company phone, laptop, and other agreed-upon benefits from the employment agreement. (Maurer, 2021.)

2.2 Bias in Recruitment

Bias is an unjust opinion against a group of people that is not based on fact. Unconscious bias is when people are unaware of assumptions they make about others based on specific characteristics. Everyone has these preferences or aversions multiple times a day. Because people are often unaware of these biases, it is essential to implement strategies within recruiting that will allow recruiters to avoid passing unfair judgement on candidates. (Pavlou, 2019.)

In 2018 a study done by researcher Akhlaq Mohamed at Helsinki University proved that in Finland, as simple a thing as having a non-Finnish name could be what stands in the way of finding suitable employment. Akhlaq sent out 5000 fake job applications, and the applicants had Finnish, English, Russian, Iraqi and Somali names. All applicants had excellent Finnish skills and completed their education in Finland by attending Finnish-speaking schools. (Yle, 2019c.)

Akhlaq's research found that the most desirable candidates were white Finnish and female. These candidates were the most likely to be shortlisted in the initial screening process and make it to the interview stage. Of the 5000 fake candidates, 221 white Finnish

females received an invitation to an interview. Of the Somali male candidates, only 34 received an invitation to an interview. Somali men scored the lowest and ranked the least desirable candidate. (Yle, 2019c.)

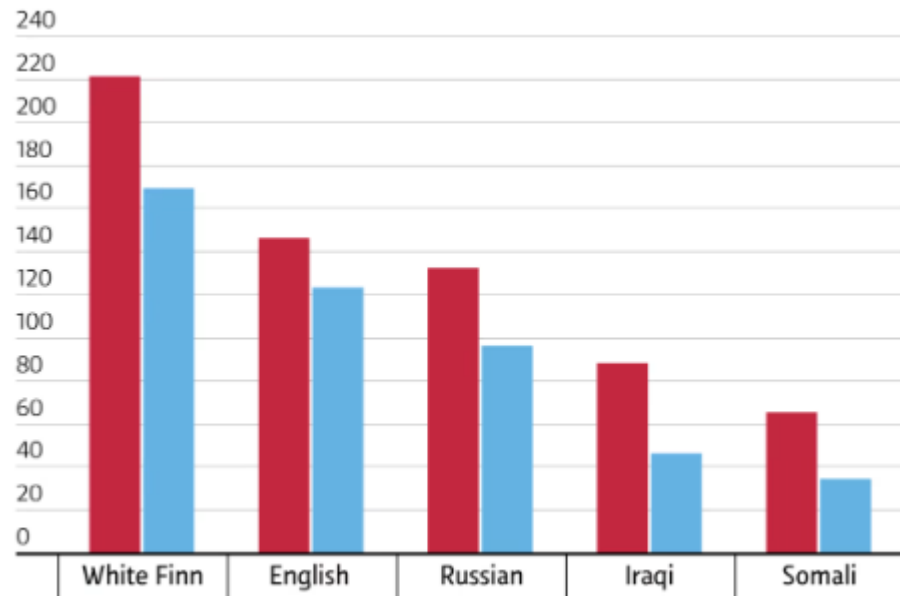


Figure 2. Interview invitations per 500 applications. (Yle, 2019b).

Immigrant women in Finland are the most likely to experience discrimination in recruitment. With a large percentage of these women being highly educated and able to handle tasks of all kinds, utilising their skills would benefit Finnish society greatly. The lack of suitable employment for skilled professionals hinders integration into society and causes a strain on family life. (Yle, 2021c.)

As the Finnish population is seeing growth in its elderly population, there is a tremendous demand for workers, increasingly so from outside of Finland. In 2017 around half of the master's degree students in Finland were foreign. With many students wanting to stay in Finland, the Finnish labour market should welcome this new talent. However, many students struggle to find work due to bias in the recruitment process. (Yle, 2021a.)

Bias in recruiting tools

Though software that uses artificial intelligence allows the recruiter to avoid bias, there is also software that can make the issue worse. Learning from past mistakes can help when moving forward in a world that relies heavily on technology.

In 2018 Amazon had to stop using an AI recruiting tool due to bias that it had learned based on reviewing ten years' worth of resumes of Amazon employees. These resumes

for the Information Technology and Engineering field were predominantly male candidates. Because of this, the AI deduced that candidates with, for example, “female chess club” or “Women’s University” in their CV were undesirable candidates for the position and were therefore not moved forward to the next stage of recruitment, where a human would have proceeded with the process. Amazon apologised for their mistake and terminated the use of this software. (*Amazon scraps AI recruiting tool showing bias against women*, 2018.)

2.3 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

In the modern business environment, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are becoming a permanent part of organisations’ operations. The functions within a company that hold the most importance in ensuring good DEI practices are generally people management and human resource teams, who are involved in all parts of the employee life cycle, from recruitment to the end of an employee’s employment. In addition, as authority figures within a company, management plays a pivotal role in ensuring that DEI practices are accepted and supported throughout an organisation. Sometimes, DEI practices are taught by outsourced consultants and specialists who aim to spread awareness and educate on the subject. (Ideal.com, s.a.)



Figure 3. The Diversity Iceberg Waterline of Visibility explains visible and invisible signs of diversity. (valamis.com, 2022).

Demonstrated in Figure 3 are types of diversity. These include race and ethnicity, culture, nationality, gender identity and sexual orientation, religious beliefs, disability, mental illness, and age. Diversity is more than characteristics that can be seen, it is also personal experience. The intention of diversity is not to single out differences among people but to understand how an entire organisation can benefit from these differences. At its core, diversity is the recognition of individuals and the understanding that each person has a

unique perspective and can contribute to the discussion with their values and experiences. (ideal.com, s.a.)

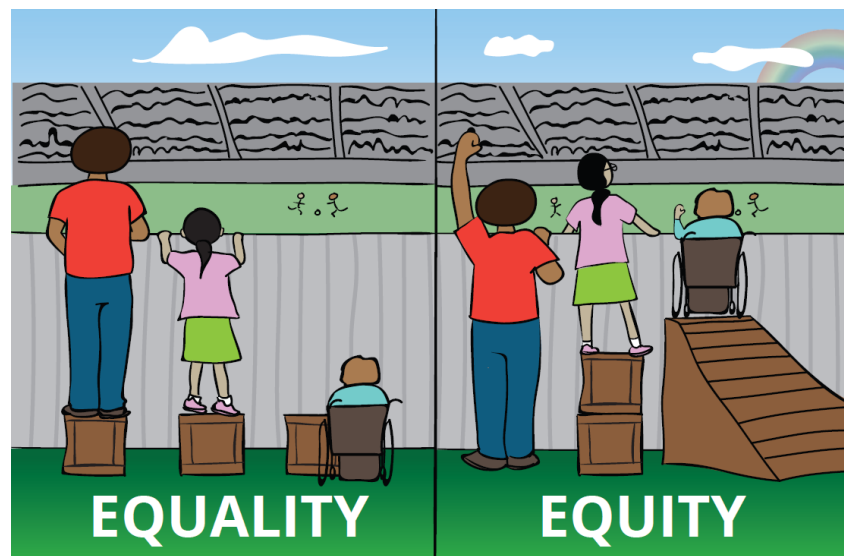


Figure 4. Equality Vs. Equity drawing. (Equitytool.org, s.a).

Equity is fair treatment of all and the tools which aid in accomplishing this. It is the understanding that the means may be different for all to be treated equally, but the result should be the same. Equity allows organisations and society to utilise the strengths of all people by creating equal opportunity. (*Free Webinar – What is DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion)?*, 2022.)

Inclusion creates a sense of belonging within an organisation by ensuring that all voices are heard and have a chance to make a difference through decision-making. In an inclusive organisation, diverse people and women are represented in all functions, from junior to executive positions. There are also transparent processes that allow employees to communicate, give feedback and raise questions if needed. (ideal.com, s.a)

Clubs like “Mixed Finns”, founded by Alice Jyske, Priska Niemi-Sampan and Janina Ojala, and associations like “Students of colour” aim to support and offer a community to those belonging to minority groups. Similarly to these student associations and clubs aimed at young people, organisations should encourage employees to get together and share their culture, initiatives and suggestions. (Yle, 2021b.)

When considering DEI, organisations should concentrate on encouraging growth and understanding how to make all voices heard- not highlighting demographic factors to aid in company branding. DEI is not only a benefit to employee well-being but is proven to make an organisation more successful. People with different backgrounds often have different

perceptions and ways of problem-solving, making for better discussion and outcomes, ultimately fostering success. (Dixon-Fyle *et al.*, s.a)

2.4 Tools for organisations

The long-term goal is to eradicate unfair bias and have a fair global community where all have equal opportunities. Until then, it should be the tools at our disposal now that organisations use to help them combat discrimination and implement DEI practices. In addition to educating employees through training and development, there are several tools at organisations' disposal to help implement fair recruiting practices. Acknowledging biases and educating recruiters on how to avoid them is essential.

The four suggested tools in this thesis are workplace training and consultants, anonymising candidates, and pulse surveys.

Workplace training and consultants

Workplace training aims to educate organisations and their employees on their conscious and unconscious biases and how to overcome and integrate DEI practices to learn to be more inclusive in all aspects of working life. An organisation or outsourced consulting firm can best gauge what areas need attention through an interview, survey analysis, and comprehensive data collection. (Sukunimi, 2022.)

It is common for organisations not to have the expertise to outline their own DEI strategy. Often it is necessary to outsource workplace training to get a more in-depth understanding of where to begin and how to implement the correct strategies and practices. Consultants are valuable tools in an organisation's journey to becoming more inclusive. (Sukunimi, 2022.)

Anonymising candidates

Software such as Teamtailor will remove a candidate's personal information, thus avoiding the initial bias that a recruiter could have otherwise experienced. When activated in the anonymous mode, this software will, for example, remove the candidate's name, age, address, and social media information and allows a recruiter to concentrate on the skills that are important for the position. (Nilsson, s.a.)

Pulse surveys

Pulse surveys allow for quick data analysis, regular employee check-ins, and quick reactions to issues. Pulse surveys and data collection are valuable tools when collecting information from and about employees. This information can help to highlight what factors are needed to create a sense of belonging from day one at a new company. (Markovic, s.a.)

Employees' issues can go unnoticed due to a lack of knowledge from those who do not experience the same treatment. Surveys and questionnaires are helpful tools for employers to check in with their employees and gain valuable insight into how employees feel about their working environment and the improvements to be made. (Markovic, s.a.)

Pulse surveys are a list of questions, no more than 10, sent out to employees regularly. These surveys can be sent out weekly, bi-monthly, or monthly. Typically, they contain a few questions that are answered with a rating of 1-5 or 1-10. These surveys differ from regular engagement surveys by being more frequent, specific, and shorter. Pulse surveys attempt to gain insight into what an employee thinks and feels. The more frequently a company uses a pulse survey, the fewer questions it should have. (Markovic, s.a.)

3 Mixed Method

The mixed method was chosen as the research method of this thesis. The mixed method is made up of both quantitative and qualitative research. Quantitative research is data analysis in which the researcher attempts to prove or disprove a hypothesis. The data is collected and can be easily transferred into number form, for example, number charts or graphs. Quantitative research highlights differences and relationships between groups to test a hypothesis. (*Quantitative Data Analysis 101 Tutorial: Statistics Explained Simply + Examples*, 2021.)

When collecting the data for quantitative research, the group of people from which the information is collected are called a sample. The sample belongs to a larger group called the population, and the population is the entire group that shares the characteristics needed for the research. Quantitative research can be separated into two main categories, descriptive and inferential statistics. (*Quantitative Data Analysis 101 Tutorial: Statistics Explained Simply + Examples*, 2021.)

In descriptive statistics, the author's focus is the sample, the specific group from which the data has been collected, in the case of this thesis, the survey respondents. In inferential statistics, the focus is on the larger group, the population who share the characteristics desired for the research. This thesis focuses on the sample, the respondents, and their answers to the survey using descriptive statistics. (*Quantitative Data Analysis 101 Tutorial: Statistics Explained Simply + Examples*, 2021.)

This thesis uses content and narrative analysis qualitative research methods. In qualitative research, the themes are argued and discussed. Data is often gathered using interviews, and in qualitative research, data is gathered using methods that, unlike quantitative research, cannot be measured in numbers. This form of research is concentrated on individuals' thoughts and perspectives on a hypothesis. Within qualitative research, there are different kinds of data analysis. (*Qualitative Data Analysis 101 Tutorial: 6 Analysis Methods + Examples*, 2021.)

Content analysis is a form of analysis in which the data collected through the chosen gathering method is observed for patterns and grouped. For example, the number of times a word or phrase is repeated. This analysis can be rather time-consuming and does not consider nonverbal communication. (*Qualitative Data Analysis 101 Tutorial: 6 Analysis Methods + Examples*, 2021.)

Narrative analysis is a form of analysis in which information is gathered by listening to the narratives of others. Through this form of research, valuable insight into others' thinking and their perspective on the subject can be gained. It can also be quite challenging to remain impartial when analysing and collecting data in this kind of analysis. (*Qualitative Data Analysis 101 Tutorial: 6 Analysis Methods + Examples*, 2021.)

4 Analysis of the interviews

The mixed method was chosen for this thesis to get an in-depth view. The intention is to get an understanding of the recruiter's view in the quantitative section through the analysis of interviews. Then a view from the candidate's perspective in the study of the qualitative part, the survey.

Interviews with two talent acquisition specialists employed by organisations belonging to the information technology industry of Finland were conducted for this thesis. The interviews were held anonymously, and the interviewees will be discussed as Person A, from interview one, and person B, from interview two. The interview questions can be read in Appendix 1. Interview questions.

Interview one was conducted in person in Helsinki city centre. Interview two took place virtually on zoom. Both interviews were comprised of the same 6 questions. Interview one lasted 2.5 hours. Interview two lasted 1.5 hours.

4.1.1 Interview one

Person A is a Junior Talent Acquisition Specialist from an information technology company with 700 employees locally.

According to person A, diversity is having people from various groups represented in the workplace; equity is giving equal opportunities and tools, inclusion is when all voices feel represented and heard. On a societal level, DEI is essential because it gives everyone equal opportunity. On a corporate level, it benefits a company to have employees of various backgrounds. Multiple approaches to solving a problem result in better ideas and outcomes.

Person A was employed by an organisation that uses Jobylon software. Jobylon is an employee welfare tool with which the organisation can anonymise candidates in the recruitment process. In addition, the company utilises Peakon pulse, a tool with which employees are asked ten questions a month. These questions are answered by giving a rating of 1-10. This allows the organisation to get a feel for how the employees feel and offers valuable insight into employee well-being. The human resources team at the organisation review the information. In addition, Speak Up allows employees to bring up any issues they may have anonymously.

Employees arrange clubs. These clubs receive funding from the organisation. Clubs include but are not limited to:

- Culture club
- LGBTQ+ community
- OutFront
- Women in IT
- Trans Group

Clubs are open to all, and employees can join using Slack. The company encourages employees to be themselves and hopes that they create a sense of belonging, openness and transparency.

When asked what challenges Person A has experienced in diverse recruitment, hiring women, especially for senior and executive positions, is mentioned. This issue is being combated by the founding of a graduate program which offers new graduates the opportunity to learn and develop their skills. All admitted to the program are provided employment. Graduate programs such as this offer the opportunity to people at the beginning of their careers so that one day diverse juniors will become diverse seniors.

Finnish should be optional for socialising purposes. Meaning that if the position itself does not require Finnish, it should not be obligatory to be able to speak to colleagues. In addition, employers need to address unconscious bias, for example, in cases where the recruiter favours candidates like the previous employee to fill the position.

Recruiters should focus on the skills and personality of a candidate. They should hire for the company's culture, not for their clients. An employer should ensure that employees feel safe and can voice their concerns anonymously.

The employer should listen to the experts when they hire DEI consultants and specialists that can aid in their mission to become more diverse and inclusive in their practices. Instead of jumping to conclusions, they should ask their employees belonging to minority groups, those with disabilities, to share their thoughts, opinions and visions for the future.

Any practices used should be implemented through research and data collection. Feedback tools are a great way to understand employees' needs and where improvement is needed. Having anonymous channels available for employees to voice their opinions is essential. Finally, employers should work for employee well-being, not marketing purposes.

4.1.2 Interview two

Person B is a Junior Talent Acquisition specialist from a Finnish space technology company with 350 employees locally.

Diversity is a group of people from all walks of life. These people are of all ages, religions, races, gender and class systems. Inclusion is how they can contribute and be included in working life.

When it comes to recruitment, good DEI practices are essential to allow a diverse group of candidates to be employed. Having a diverse group of recruiters can also be beneficial, and this will allow for multiple perspectives when it comes to screening candidates.

At person B's company, a candidate is interviewed by multiple employees, recruiters, hiring managers, and future teammates to ensure a fair hiring process. Candidates are interviewed and screened not only to provide an excellent cultural fit but also to make sure they can handle the challenges of specialised work. Being screened by multiple people helps to avoid a candidate being hired solely because of unconscious bias and similarities between a candidate and one recruiter. Having several people involved in the process allows for objectiveness and conversation, which helps to avoid bias but can also create a lengthy hiring process.

To ensure that the interview process is fair and unbiased, in addition to the recruiter's knowledge and expertise, there is also a list of questions they are not allowed to ask. These questions include marital status and children, nationality, and sexual orientation. When creating the job description, it is essential to understand what kind of message is trying to be relayed to the candidate. Employers should focus on the skills required for the position, not a candidate's name and background. If candidates do not fill the work requirements, they should be informed why their application is not proceeding.

Companies should refrain from posting job descriptions in English for positions intended for Finnish speakers to try and come off as inclusive. This false advertising is discouraging to the candidate. Avoid misleading candidates. Being sensitive towards a candidate and whatever they may be going through in their job search and life is essential, and empathy should play a role in recruitment. Making suggestions towards candidates regarding skills they could improve will leave a good impression and foster interest for candidates to apply for other positions. Furthermore, it can aid company branding via word of mouth.

Organisations must understand that inclusive measures must be taken through globalisation and diversification. Especially in organisations not used to change, it is essential to

move forward. Companies not taking steps toward diversification will be left behind in today's international business environment.

5 Analysis of the survey

The survey for this thesis included nine multiple choice questions that can be found in Appendix 2. Survey questions. The survey questions were published on Webropol, a survey and reports platform. The survey was published on the 24th of October 2022 and remained visible to respondents for one week. It was closed on the 31st of November, 2022. The author shared the survey on several WhatsApp groups, the author's Facebook account and LinkedIn. In addition, the survey was shared on the International Working Women of Finland Facebook group.

The sample for the survey included 43 Finnish and non-Finnish respondents from 9 countries with varying Finnish and English language abilities. The respondents were 18 to 55 years old and in different stages of employment. The survey questions were limited to exploring recruitment practices regarding age, gender, nationality, and English and Finnish Language ability. The research focuses on descriptive statistics concentrating on this specific group of individuals.

The survey respondents primarily found that they faced the most discrimination in hiring requirements and shortlisting stages of recruitment. The main hindrance was a need for Finnish language ability, even in positions where Finnish was not required for the work. Other candidates felt they were not considered for the job simply because of a foreign name and attached photos in their CV showing their foreign background or heritage.

Age

Over 50-year-olds are the most likely to experience age discrimination. In job uncertainty cases, people of this age group are the most likely to be laid off. However, there is no reason to believe that they are any less capable of handling their tasks well. (Yle, 2019b.)

Many people over 50 need more support due to discouraging results after forgoing unsuccessful recruitment processes. In these recruitment processes, they feel they have yet to make it past the shortlisting phase to an interview due to their age. (Yle, 2019b.)

The survey respondents were 18 to 55 years old, with most of the respondents being between 25 and 34 years old. 62 % of the Finnish and 43 % of the non-Finnish respondents were aged between 25 and 34.

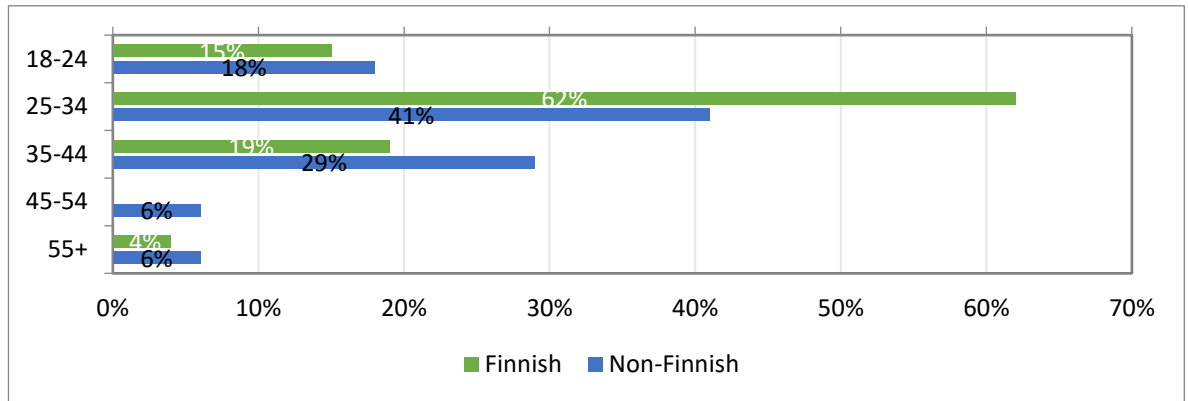


Figure 5. Bar graph showing the age of the survey sample (consolidated by author)

Nationality

Of the 43 respondents, 26 were Finnish, the remaining 17 were from outside of Finland, and the respondents were from 9 different countries:

- Britain
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- India
- Iran/Finland
- Italy
- Kenya

African and Middle Eastern employees are the most likely to experience workplace discrimination (Yle, 2019a). White foreign candidates are preferred over black candidates and are more likely to receive interview invitations. (Yle, 2019c).

Microaggressions, often unintentional discriminatory statements toward a person belonging to a minority group, are regular occurrences for foreigners in Finland and Finns that belong to minority groups. (Yle, 2021b.)

Name

Foreigners in Finland are not alone in facing discrimination due to their name and heritage. Though it is essential to have equal hiring and recruitment practices for all, special attention also needs to be given to multiracial Finns and first and second-generation Finns with immigrant names and backgrounds. They are starting as “second-class” citizens in the Finnish labour market. (Yle, 2021b.)

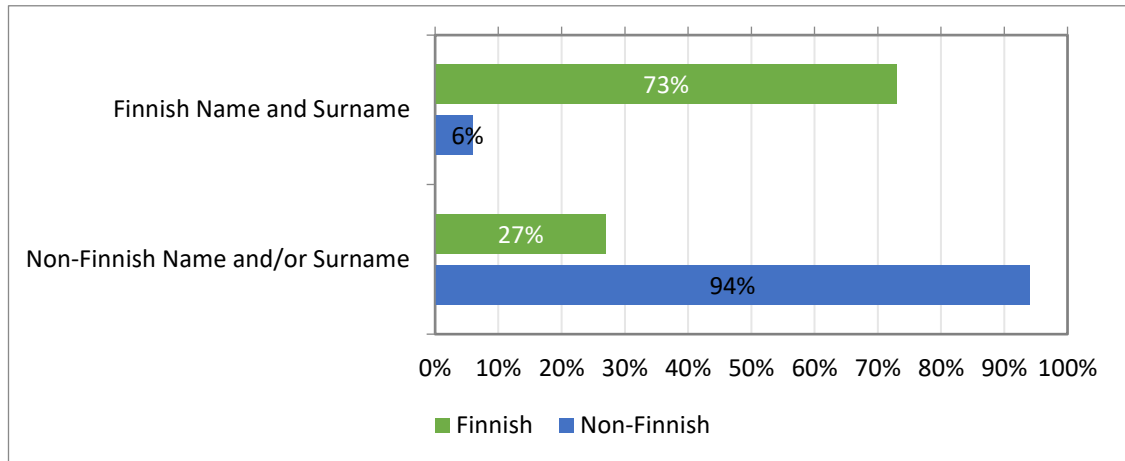


Figure 6. Bar graph showing Finnish and non-Finnish names of survey sample (consolidated by author)

Language proficiency

Finnish language proficiency is often why foreigners struggle to find work in Finland. In some cases, the Finnish language is not necessary for the job but is still mandatory in the listing. Through research at Helsinki University done by Akhlaq Mohamed, mentioned in the theoretical framework of this thesis, there is clear evidence that even in Finnish fluency cases, applicants are still not hired. Regardless of qualifications and language ability. (Yle, 2019c.)

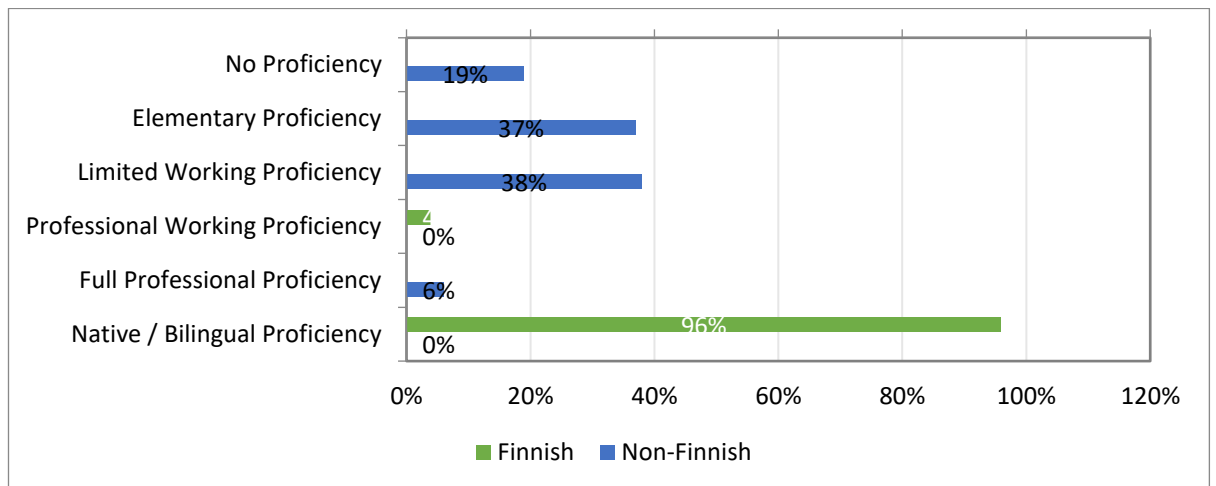


Figure 7. Bar graph showing Finnish language proficiency of survey sample (consolidated by author)

The respondent's English language proficiency level varied from Professional Working Proficiency to Native/ Bilingual Proficiency. With most Non-Finnish respondents selecting Full Professional Proficiency. An equal amount of Finnish respondents selected Full Proficiency and Native/Bilingual Proficiency.

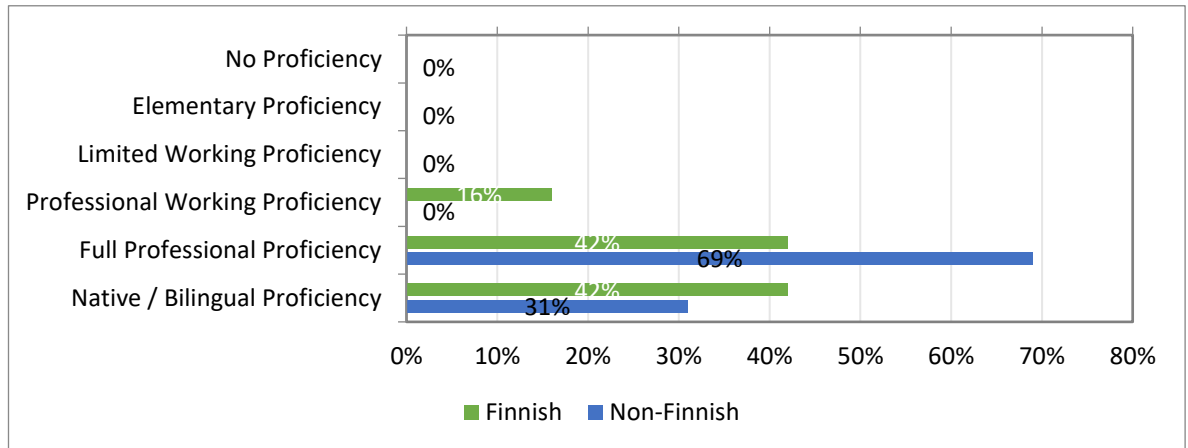


Figure 8. Bar graph showing English language proficiency of survey sample (consolidated by author)

Occupation

Of the respondents to the survey, most were full-time employees. 54 % of the Finnish respondents were Full-time employees, and 50 % of the non-Finnish respondents were full-time employees. The second highest selected option was a student at 35 % and 38 %.

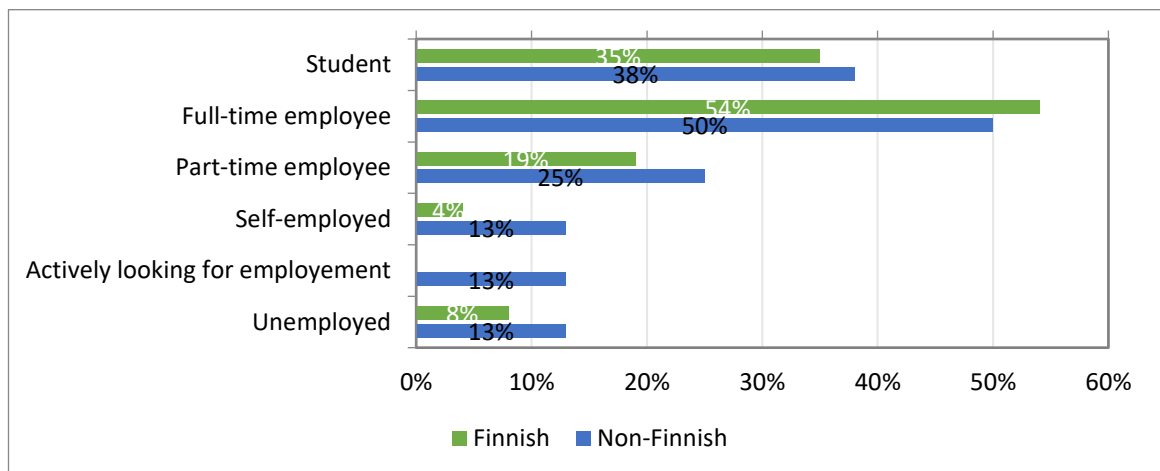


Figure 9. Bar graph showing occupation of survey sample (consolidated by author)

Discrimination

In the Finnish labour market today, discrimination is often not direct, and bias is often seen in lower pay for foreigners and women. Respondents were asked if they have faced discrimination in any of the seven stages of recruitment and were asked to fill in an optional text field for a more in-depth understanding of their experience.

56 % of the non-Finnish candidates felt that they had faced discrimination in the Hiring requirements stage of recruitment. 43.8 % of the non-Finnish candidates thought they had

faced discrimination in the job description stage. They claimed that native / bilingual proficiency in Finnish was required for jobs where it should not have been, and Finnish was required for positions where the working language was English.

In the shortlisting stage, 43.8 % of the non-Finnish candidates felt that they had faced discrimination. They stated that having a non-Finnish name or photograph attached to a CV was what stood in the way of moving forward to the next stage of recruitment.

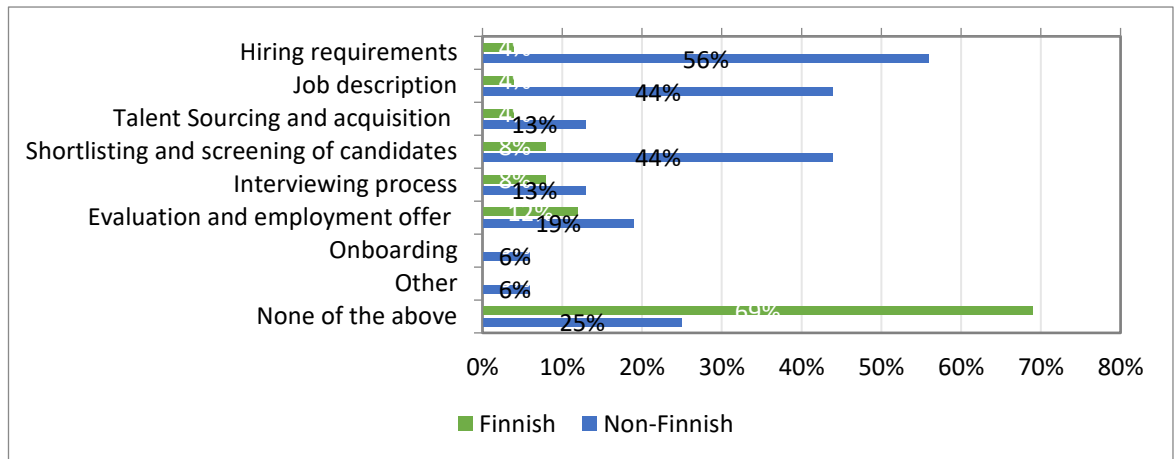


Figure 10. Bar graph showing which of the seven stages of the recruitment survey sample experienced discrimination (consolidated by author)

Of the Non-Finnish respondents, 25 % stated not having faced discrimination in any of the stages of recruitment. Of the Finnish respondents, 69 % stated have not faced discrimination in any of the stages of recruitment. Of the remaining 31 % of Finnish respondents, all were female and faced discrimination.

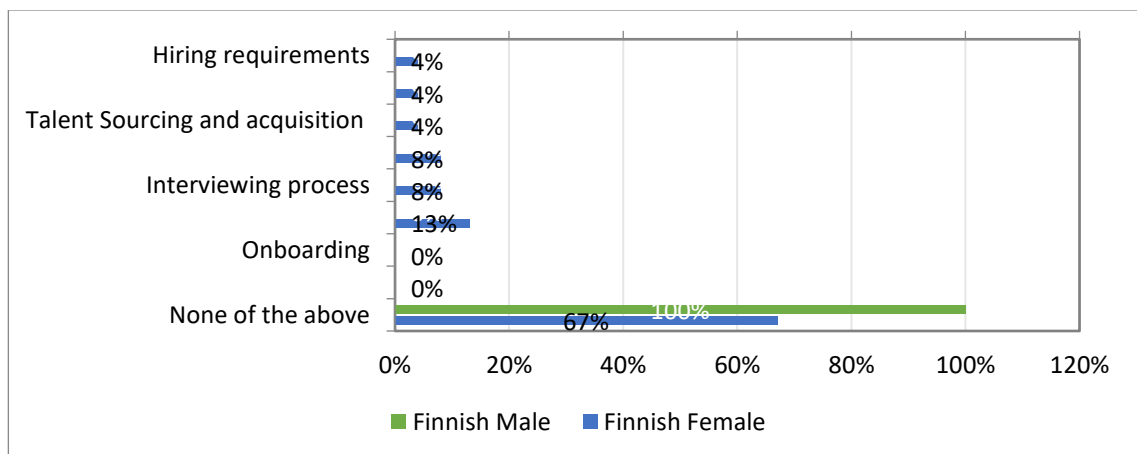


Figure 11. Bar graph showing which of seven stages of recruitment survey sample experienced discrimination divided into male and female respondents (consolidated by author)

Both male and female respondents participated in this survey. Most of the respondents were female. 92 % of Finnish and 65 % of non-Finnish respondents were female. Finnish

female respondents faced discrimination in the evaluation and employment stages of recruitment. Having been given lower salary offers than male colleagues. In a job description, military service had been a requirement for an office job. International work experience had been completely overlooked for another candidate in the shortlisting and interview stages. Today, women earn 16 % less in the Finnish labour market than men. (Yle, 2021c).

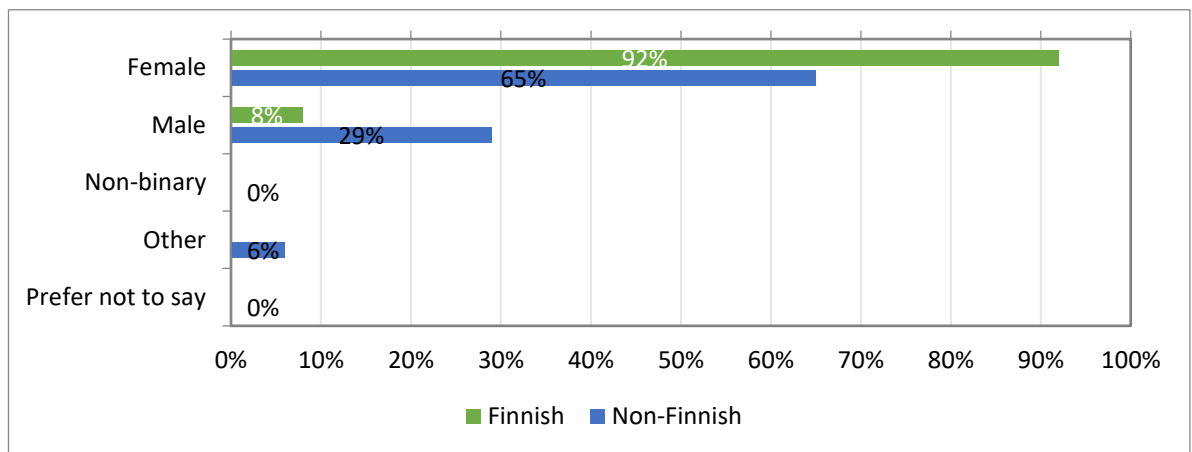


Figure 12. Bar graph showing gender of survey sample (consolidated by author)

Thoughts and comments of participants

In the final section, the survey respondents were asked for any thoughts or comments that they may have had on the subject. Many of the Finnish respondents appreciated the subject and hoped the situation was moving in a better direction. There were also a few cases of discrimination due to gender. One Finnish female respondent recalled a friend not receiving a position due to pregnancy. The candidate made a complaint and was later hired for a similar position at the company.

Another Finnish female respondent shared that she had been offered 300 euros less than a male colleague after completing the same internship and being hired for the same position. Having already completed her degree and the male colleague still being a student, she brought this up with her manager. The reason for the difference in pay was that women settle for less and therefore do not need to be offered the same salary.

Some non-Finnish respondents felt that they had faced discrimination in the recruiting process due to their race, stating that white immigrants are preferred candidates. One commented that “hiring feels like a scam” another said that even though things are changing in Finland and companies are looking to diversify, non-white immigrants, are not hired for senior or executive positions, only for junior and low-level positions.

A non-Finnish respondent mentioned that they were happy with their recruiting process, company, and DEI process', with which they have felt a sense of belonging in their company and can contribute to discussions and make a difference. Another said that after many years in Finland, they received a university education in Information Technology and have since been employed through fair recruiting practices in the tech industry.

Finally, one respondent mentioned the importance of companies clearly outlining their DEI policies and ensuring that they were followed and aligned with the company culture.

6 Discussion

The seven stages of recruitment are identifying hiring requirements, creating and publishing job descriptions, talent sourcing and acquisition, shortlisting and screening, interview process, evaluation and employment agreement, and onboarding. These seven stages are essential in ensuring as competent a recruitment process as possible. When done correctly, they invoke in both the candidates that were not hired and the onboarded new employee(s) a sense of professionalism and inclusivity from an organisation.

Common biases in Finnish recruiting practices are discrimination due to a candidate's name, language proficiency, and ethnicity. Research points to discrimination against Finnish and non-Finnish candidates with non-Finnish names, Finnish language proficiency for positions where the working language is English and skilled candidates that are not hired because of their ethnicity. (Yle, 2019c.)

Unconscious bias attracts recruiters to candidates that are like them. In a world where organisations are hyper-focused on company culture and branding, organisations should realise that hiring for a good culture fit does not advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion. It instead surrounds employees with people that are the same as them. The similarity is not the goal, but rather differences and honouring them.

The importance of integration and language studies in both academic and work life are essential. Immigrants and international students should be given the means to learn the Finnish language necessary to excel in their job search and integration into Finnish society. All academic institutions should encourage their students to learn the language through thorough courses teaching them the language and skills needed to succeed in their move to Finland.

Creating associations within an organisation to support DEI is a valuable tool for collecting information. An association should be composed of a diverse group of people, demographically and according to the employee's position. The association should have a shared mission aligned with the organisation itself. It is important to remember that whatever the task is, it should benefit the company, drive growth, and be seen as advantageous to the organisation. (Diversity and inclusion in the workplace: Where to start and what's next?, 2021.)

Diversity, equity, and inclusion aim to cultivate all employees' talent by concentrating on their skills and development rather than demographic factors. It empowers employees to speak up for themselves and contribute to the organisation fearlessly and professionally.

Organisations need to implement strategies to develop benefits for all candidates and employees.



Figure 13 The Paradigm Shift to DEI. (*Free Webinar – What is DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion)?*, 2022).

An organisation can create an inclusive environment by shifting or changing its perspective. An employer that cultivates DEI strategies to recruit and retain talented professionals will transform their workplace and, in turn, their community. Ultimately creating a more inclusive society for all. (*Free Webinar – What is DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion)?*, 2022.)

Evaluation of thesis process

My ability to understand and analyse research material has improved during this process. It has been fascinating to practice theoretical research to this extent. I have enjoyed collecting data, reading research, articles and material, and meeting like-minded people passionate about the subject.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion should not be used for company branding or tokenism and should be given the credit it deserves. Learning more about how these elements work within our society and organisations has been the highlight of my studies. Empathy and open-mindedness are often not at the forefront of profitable business ideology, which is a shame. In all my research, I have found that a sense of acceptance and allowing individuals to be themselves, creates a sense of belonging that encourages people to show up not only for themselves, but also for their peers.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview Questions

Place:

Date:

Interviewee information

Position:

Industry:

Company size:

Years of experience:

1. How do you define diversity, equity, and inclusion? Why do you believe they are essential in recruiting practices?
2. Does your company use any specific tools to ensure inclusive recruitment?
3. What can be done to ensure a diverse group of candidates?
4. What challenges have you faced in diverse recruitment, and how have you dealt with them?
5. What recruitment areas need the most attention and improvement? How would you aim to fix these areas?
6. What advice would you give to a company looking to become more inclusive in its recruitment practices?

Appendix 2. Survey Questions

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Recruitment practices

Mandatory questions are marked with a star (*)

1. Age *

18-24

25-34

35-44

45-54

55+

2. Gender *

Female

Male

Non-binary

Other

Prefer not to say

3. Nationality *

Finnish

Other

4. Name *

Finnish Name and Surname

Non-Finnish Name and/or Surname

5. Finnish Language level *

No Proficiency

Elementary Proficiency

Limited Working Proficiency

Professional Working Proficiency

Full Professional Proficiency

Native / Bilingual Proficiency

6. English Language Level *

No Proficiency

Elementary Proficiency

Limited Working Proficiency

Professional Working Proficiency

Full Professional Proficiency

Native / Bilingual Proficiency

7. Occupation. Select one or more. *

Student

Full-time employee

Part-time employee

Self-employed

Actively looking for employment

Unemployed

8. I feel that I face discrimination in one or more of the following recruitment processes.

Please fill text field if you would like to. It will be very insightful if you do! *

Hiring requirements

Job description

Talent Sourcing and acquisition

Shortlisting and screening of candidates

Interviewing process

Evaluation and employment offer

Onboarding

Other

None of the above

9. Comments or thoughts on the subject?