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BREAKING BARRIERS:

A podcast about mental health and racism

ABSTRACT

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Breaking Barriers: A podcast about mental health and racism
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This development-based thesis aimed to provide the working life partner with a podcast focusing on racism and mental health. This project was developed in collaboration with MIELI Without Borders which is an organization that focuses on advocating for foreign language speakers in Finland. The working life partner offers peer support, guidance, and support in the field of mental health.

The main objective of the project is to demonstrate the usage of podcasts to address topics society struggles to discuss in the social and health sector to create a wider reach to clients. In the thesis project, the focus is on addressing the topics of peer pressure and what is missing from the field through the intersection of racism and mental health.

For the development project, a podcast was created called Breaking Barriers where the discussion focuses on racism and mental health. To promote the podcast, students developed a social media video and created two podcast episodes and edited that themselves. By using a comprehensive review of existing literature, and consulting with the working life partner, students came to understand that peer support and recognition of what is missing from the field are very relevant topics to consider when it comes to mental health and racism.

The first episode is about peer support and its importance in those who experience racism and how that affects their mental health. The second episode is about addressing the gaps of what's missing from the field. This is done from the perspective of us as students and future professionals as well as referencing professionals we have interviewed.

The podcast was evaluated by the working-life partner via feedback and evaluations of metrics of SWOT and SMART analysis and viewer metrics. In conclusion, the outcomes were primarily aligned with the expectations of this development-based thesis and the working-life partner.

Keywords: Race, racism, mental health, podcast, intersectionality

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1 INTRODUCTION

This development-based thesis addresses how racism affects mental health in the form of podcast episodes that primarily focus on peer support and what is missing from the field.

This podcasting project was developed in collaboration with the MIELI Without Borders organization. The focus of the two episodes includes what peer support is, what is missing from the field, and its importance: all while sharing personal experiences as well as expanding on our interview with a professional from the field.

Our objective is to show how to use podcasts to address topics society struggles to discuss in the social and health sector to create a wider reach to clients. The chosen subject for our project, is addressing racism and mental health. There is a lack of research on the intersection of racism's effects on mental health, specifically in the context of Finland. Furthermore, according to our thesis working life partner, "About one-third of foreign-language speakers in Finland feel that they would have needed support for their mental health but didn't reach out." (MIELI Without Borders, n.d.)

The objectives were assessed and evaluated using the SMART objectives and SWOT analysis, including risk assessment. We then used the measurements by assessing feedback from the working life partner and analyzing the podcast's exposure based on the viewer metrics provided by the working life partner.

In creating the podcast series and evaluating the objectives, the framework shaping our approach reviews the context of racism in Europe. A report by the Center for Intersectional Justice (CIJ) commissioned by the European Network Against Racism (ENAR), touches on systematic racism when speaking of the unspeakability of race. ENAR states that one of the main challenges with intersectionality in Europe is caused by the resistance to acknowledge the reality of race and racism reality.

Even though race carries no importance in the state of law, politics, society, and other areas, European countries oppose color or race. Countries have a tradition of opposing color or race, specifically in the legal field where race is considered irrelevant in the field of law, politics, and society. On a structural level, this restricts extremely important policy and legal measures to address racial discrimination. (Sanaullah, 2022, p.8)

2 KEYWORDS

To support the cogency of this thesis, clarifying the key concepts is vital. The defining key concepts related to this development project are race and racism, intersectionality, mental health, and podcasts. Along with defining the key concepts, the terms are described in how they have been operationalized within the thesis, along with connecting it all back to their relevance within the social service field.

2.1 Race and racism

The idea of race in the context of Europe holds an inaccurate understanding, in that Europe is somehow in a post-racial age. As understood in the book *Race and State*; while biological racial differences do not exist, the effects of racism itself are as prevalent as ever. This is further emphasized when the idea of democracy and human rights are valued in the Western world, and in Finland in this context, yet remain out of reach. (Lentin, Lentin, 2006) When referencing race in this thesis, it is vital to understand the contextual aspect of being in Europe. In connection to the context of the Finnish social service system, the podcast highlights the importance, yet lack of culturally competent services where one's racial experiences are taken into consideration. The podcast highlights the need for proper anti-racist training instead of the current care system which positions racialized individuals who are already in a vulnerable place, to advocate for themselves, often while just surviving with limited energy or resources.

Throughout the podcast episodes, the concept of race is operationalized in many ways. For instance, in the episodes it is recognized as a construct that shapes the availability and level of care racialized individuals are offered. In the episodes, it is a recognition of the shared identities that shape peer support.

The ENAR Intersectionality Report, recognizes that the refusal to bring up the conversation of race and instead referring to racism as isolated occurrences, ignores the institutional, structural, and historical racism that European countries

are foundationally built upon. (Sanaullah ,2022, pp.8-10 This also makes it more difficult to confront the institutions and structures that uphold racial injustice.

2.2 Racism

With all the promotion of confronting racism, the policies that have been implemented reveal the dissonance in the underlying issue of failing to confront racism within the embedded structures that exist. Lentin and Lentin (2006) emphasize that over the last fifty years, governments have both attempted to boost the significance of confronting racism, all while creating policies that are both racist and fall short in challenging the level of discrimination that leads to racism. (Lentin, Lentin, 2006)

Within Europe, and specifically in Finland, racism is widespread. For example, when referring to the statistic about how 25% of racism incidents were targeted towards people of African descent, Nevalainen also mentions that in Finland people of African descent are faced with 25% of incidents related to racism. (Nevalainen, 2023). Furthermore, in the last five years according to the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, in Finland, people of African descent face racist harassment most frequently in comparison to 12 other countries. (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2018)

Even though racism is so widespread, there is a general sense of unreadability surrounding it. This is clear, as according to the European Network Against Racism (ENAR), it creates a delegitimization of people and movements who try to confront the history that is rooted in racial oppression. Furthermore, the denial of the reality of history also serves to erase race, which poses European countries as an egalitarian and enlightened society, all while obscuring and silencing anti-racist dialogue and action. (Sanaullah, 2022)

In this thesis, while developing the podcast series, the concept of racism is recognized consistently through experiences shared by professionals in the sector from MIELI Without Borders. The approach is an attempt to unpack the

experiences of racism and take clear steps toward a society that sees and hears the reality, making effective changes collectively.

Within the podcast, racism is operationalized as a direct cause of mental health struggles. This is measurable through the discussion of the psychological impact that systemic racism and microaggressions have on individuals who experience racism. Furthermore, on a professional level many individuals experience racism from countries outside the EU are met with a lack of recognition for their professional qualifications, especially when from countries in the global south. This often results in mental distress as was discussed in depth and specifically referred to by the professional we interviewed.

Race and racism widely affect the social service field. This is recognized on an interpersonal, structural, institutional, and historical level. In the field specifically, this is clear when we look at the access to services or services being different for different people. As summarized from *Decolonizing Social Work in Finland*, Finnish society is predominantly white and westernized. Due to aspects of colonialism and White supremacy that have shaped the field, this shows up in the work with racialized communities and people who have migrated, which then face not only institutional racism, as well as assimilation, control individualism, emotional distance, and centering whiteness. Therefore, it is crucial for workers in the social service field to deeply reflect on the colonial and nationalistic roots of the field itself, as well as understanding how it plays a role in the present structural mechanisms. Intentionally coming to investigate this, we can begin to confront the current structures of oppression rooted in colonialism and racism, rather than unwittingly perpetuating them (Clark et al., 2024, p.87).

2.3 Mental health

According to the World Health Organization, mental health is the state of well-being that gives people the ability to handle the stresses that occur, recognize, and realize their capabilities, work, and learn well, and be involved in one's community. (World Health Organization: WHO., 2022) However, in our understanding of it via the podcast episodes, we stress the importance of mental health as something beyond the ability to work at a job, but to relax and thrive and simply be. Additionally, we strive to use a framework of thinking that aims to recognize the impact of systems of oppression that are complicit on a structural level in creating worse conditions for mental health on a collective level.

Mental health is a fundamental part of our state of wellness and propels the individual and collective capability to sustain the connection with the people around us. All this shapes the world one lives in. (World Health Organization, WHO., 2022) In the context of this podcast, mental health and racism are intertwined as often when experiencing racism, mental health is affected as well. We can gather the book *Decolonising Social Work in Finland: Racialisation and Practices of Care*, there is a clear level of diminishing racialized individuals through not only care systems but also structurally in Finnish society. This then results in mental distress which is upheld both culturally and monetarily by the non-profit organizations that are largely led by white organizers. (Clarke, et.al., 2024, p.169) Considering foreign-language speakers who feel the detrimental impact of racism on their mental health, this is the lens in which we address such subjects in our podcast episodes, and throughout this thesis.

The episodes of this podcast serve as an instrument to address measurable factors such as the psychological impacts of racism, gaps in the services and field, lack of empathy and cultural competency of service providers, and the lack of recognition in professional qualifications of marginalized groups.

For example, during the first podcast episode, we specifically discuss peer support. Local peer support structures themselves are one measure of the mental

health support systems that are in place. By first defining peer support, to then discussing how on a structural level, Finland tends to put different communities into different boxes: failing to adequately center the community and their needs while building these resources.

In the second episode, the concept of mental health is measured by identifying the gaps in the field of social services that may lead to a decline in mental health. This specifically includes identifying the impact of systemic racism and micro-aggressions. Furthermore, in the episode, there is the identification of how the inaccessibility of services that are adequate impacts marginalized individuals. The inadequacy of services is non-comprehensively identified by questioning how many professionals are available with cultural competency, and in relation, identifying the growing rates of unmet mental health needs among marginalized communities.

In the field of social services, professionals should not only be aware of the inadequacy of social services in relation to anti-racism, cultural competency and unmet mental health needs but proactively work to implement the knowledge with both professionals and social services. Continuing this conversation through the method of a podcast is one way. As stated by Clarke, as social service professionals or providers, we have to take a long look at the lack of research on the impacts of structural racism on mental health, as well as the differential diagnoses of racialized individuals receive as opposed to people who are read as white. Furthermore, Clarke mentions Frantz Fanon, a medical doctor who specialized in psychiatry in Algeria at the time of fighting the French colonizers, links the distress of colonialism specifically to structural violence, in the (Clarke et al., 2024, p164-167)

2.4 Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a powerful concept and lens that can be enlisted to combat discrimination. As understood by ENAR, it expands the understanding of discrimination to encompass sections of people who are often missed by the current structures of anti-discrimination. Moreover, it widens the lens from the individual to a structural level on discrimination, which broadens the structural measures that can be used to address discrimination. Lastly, it allows us to comprehend the interwoven landscape of identity, discrimination, and systemic oppression. (Sanaullah, 2022) Within our thesis, intersectionality, while a broad concept, is essential to comprehend the landscape that the podcast is based on.

Overall, five main topics were operationalized within this thesis. Peer support was measured based on the personal and non-personal experiences related by both hosts and guests of the podcast. The impact of racism was illustrated by connecting the experiences of discrimination with measurable psychological outcomes. Also, how racism through under-recognition for racialized individuals' qualifications acts as a structural barrier to employment. The psychological impact of this is recognized as well. The format of podcasting is operationalized within this thesis to create a storytelling approach that makes what can often seem at first like abstract concepts more concrete. The concept of intersectionality was operationalized by acting as a base from which we could understand our own point of view or biases, understanding the comprehensive review of literature and professional we interviewed, as well as how we came together with the working-life partner to create a podcast-based thesis.

Within the social service field, an approach that may be useful is the decolonial approach of cultural humility. This insists that learning of the importance of the service user cultural background as well as one's own background and positionality and power structures they are a part of. (Clarke, et al., 2024, p.101).

2.5 Podcast

Podcasts are a digital audio method of creating accessible episodes to listen to while doing almost anything. According to Young, students especially feel listening is easier than reading, and that hearing the words from the direct voice fosters greater empathy. (Young, et al., 2020) With topics that can be quite heavy at times, having a podcast as the format is a useful method to better connect the subject matter with the listener. Young goes on further to state how hearing recordings of the stories themselves can allow the listener to slow down and hear the words come to life. (Young, et al., 2020) Overall, creating a podcast that is widely accessible is one step toward in bringing to life to the experience of mental health and racism in Finland.

Operationalizing podcasts as an alternative catalyst for an accessible dialog on racism and mental health. The podcast thesis format intends to act as an amplification of voices that are often left unheard, beyond the episodes we have created. In the episodes, being able to hear direct voices speaking of difficult topics fosters a greater sense of empathy.

This episode structure of prospective potential operates as a catalyst for future episodes. Being able to create episodes with the set-up of interviewing a professional and having a built-in audience of the working-life partner's target group, can then be utilized as a space for future community-driven discussion. Furthermore, with the ever-increasing development and accessibility of technologies, digital literacy, as well, is a necessary part of the social service professional's skillset. (Twelvetrees, A., & Todd, R., 2024) Therefore, as the field evolves, skills such as utilizing the methodology of creating accessible formats of information sharing; and podcasts become increasingly relevant. With the use of podcasts, it can be beneficial as it has the power to connect a variety of voices in an easier digestible format, along with being relatively cost-effective. Furthermore, it can also be used specifically by social service professionals to connect communities, while also confronting hierarchies in spaces of knowledge.

3 BACKGROUND, TARGET GROUP, AND WORKING LIFE PARTNER

3.1 Contextualizing racism in Finland

Even though the idea that people who have immigrated are very new in the Finnish context, according to the Finnish historian Miika Tervonen homogeneous Finnishness is a myth that was created in the 1800s as a part of a larger European nationalist movement. (Tervonen, 2015 pp.137– 162). “There are people who were born in Finland, are Finnish citizens, but are racialized as non-White, and therefore as non-Finns and who didn’t come here from anywhere.” (Clarke et al., 2024)

We can realize that racism is experienced even by the Finnish people themselves, though they speak the same language, have the same traditions, and identify themselves as part of the Finnish community. Jennifer Chung explains that the Finns had to fight for the Finnish language to be the main language of the country, as opposed to Swedish, and that this plays a significant role in their ‘nationalistic’ spirit. They insist on holding on to the Finnish language in every way possible, not wanting to lose it. (Chung, 2019)

Through the years, nationalism has had a great impact on racism. Many newcomers experience systematic racism that is so embedded in systems that it often is assumed to reflect the natural, inevitable order of things.” (Braveman et al., 2022) When the language issue is addressed, such as most of the services aimed at non-Finnish speakers being in the Finnish language, it might seem like these people are not making the most out of the services available to them. In truth, they are unaware of the services.

3.2 Contextualizing mental health in Finland

The Finnish suicide rate has been high compared to other countries of Europe. (Henden, 2017, p.225) In the same book, Henden mentions that this is about the

consumption of alcohol and the damage to mental health because of World War II. Even though the suicide rates are very high, people getting support is not equal to said rates. (THL)

Mental health is a stigmatized topic to talk about in Finland. The new generations are more accepting towards the issues of mental health, as it is now more normalized through social media and other media channels, but it is relatively a new concept. Mental health services in Finland are simply not enough. It might take several months for a person to even get the first counseling session from the state's health center. If a person opts to go for a private clinic, it is very costly. At the same time most of these services are offered only in Finnish. If a person is willing to pay and get service from a private clinic the chances, are they will only find Finnish service available and not a service offered in English let alone their mother language.

The difficulties in mental health practice in terms of how need is defined and met illustrate powerfully that how ill health may manifest itself is bounded by social and cultural norms, and these are not shared by everyone. (Gines, 2014)

It is very important for a person to receive this service by someone who understands their background and reasons behind some actions, through traditional practices.

3.3 Work-life partner and target group

Since our thesis is about racism's effect on mental health, the idea of choosing MIELI Without Borders Ry was very appropriate. MIELI Without Borders is a member organization of MIELI ry that was founded in 2022 by foreign language speakers who believe that you can't talk about integration Without talking about mental health. (*MIELI Without Borders*, n.d.)

MIELI Without Borders, from the name gives out the purpose of the branch; not to create Borders for people who are trying to access services provided for them. MIELI Without Borders offers low-threshold activities that are community-based.

Our work-life partner MIELI Without Borders, advocates for mental health awareness for those who speak a foreign language here in Finland. MIELI Without Border's aims are primarily to spread awareness and destigmatize the topic.

Our target group is the non-Finnish-speaking population of Finland. We wanted to align the target group with our working life partner, so we decided not to focus on a more specific age range for example.

As we talk about our topic of racism and its effects on mental health, we know that daily a lot of what we encounter in our surroundings shapes the way we think and the perspective we hold. In a country like Finland, most of the services are given in the Finnish language. Even if a foreigner tries to master their inclusion and language skills, it is hard to hear about the opportunities and services available locally. A study by Williams and Faber show that many people are socialized not to notice these issues and kids are taught from a young age not to discuss race since it is considered taboo. We wanted our thesis project to address that ignoring talking about these subjects does not make them go away and being silent about these only reinforces the existing system of inequality. (Williams & Faber, 2024)

While we were choosing our work-life partner, we wanted to find one that aligned with our goal. We wanted to work with a partner who has done diverse activities offers services in more than just one language (Finnish) and has outreach and suggestions about how to deal with the very same matter.

While we wanted to talk about this topic in our podcast, we wanted to use English as the mediator. MIELI Without Borders agreed with us and has also helped us in arranging an interview with a professional in the field.

In the upcoming parts of this thesis, there will be more information about the interview and the process. For now, thought this interview, we have more insight into the field and received some of the evidence that supports some of the points we have been discussing. Since this topic is very stigmatized there is very little,

research done and not many resources available. For the very same reasons mentioned, it was very fruitful to have the insights of professionals in the field.

4 GOAL AND OBJECTIVE

In this chapter, we give an insight into the goals and objective of the project. Once we have defined the goal and objective for the project, we will use a SMART analysis which stands for specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time bound. With the help of SMART analysis (TABLE 1), it will make it easier to implement the project and analyze all the factors. (Swann et al., 2022)

The goal of the thesis is to offer knowledge and find different ways to discuss topics that society has deemed too difficult to speak about in the form of a two-episode podcast series and a short promotional video. The episodes will include personal stories and information regarding the intersection of racism and mental health. The short video will be used on different platforms to promote and create attraction for listeners to discover the podcast.

The topics we have chosen to talk about in the podcast are mental health and racism. As we understand, these topics are quite broad subjects, and the developmental process we have chosen to make a podcast can only expand to a certain extent. Therefore, through further comprehensive review of existing literature, and consulting with our working life partner, we came to understand that peer support and what is missing from the field are the most relevant topics to consider in terms of mental health and racism. By creating a podcast, our goal is to try to create a new accessible tool in the form of a podcast to reach people in social and health care and to bridge the gap between these two topics, to destigmatize discussing mental health and racism.

The objective is to illustrate the use of podcasts to discuss social and health topics that society has difficulty discussing to reach customers more widely. With the podcast, we aim to give insight and offer support to foreign language speakers.

We are in a digital world and people are mostly not interested or simply may not have the time to read books and research information. There is a need for services to find different ways to share their message effectively.

Podcasts on various topics are the new form of entertainment that people are increasingly listening to. It has become the new big thing. More and more people are creating podcasts as educational tools or creating a podcast as something fun to do. It has come time for the social and health care sector to adapt to the new digital world and start reaching people in a way that information and support will reach them. By creating an accessible and lasting format we hope many from the social and health sector will follow suit to reach clients. (Bucher, 2023)

TABLE 1. SMART analysis of objective.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To create a two-episode podcast series and a short reel video for social media to promote the podcast before it is published. • By doing this we aim to offer information and combine two topics.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measurable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The podcast episode topics were planned and discussed within the thesis group and with the working life. • Feedback will be gathered from the working life partner before the video is published. • We can also see and measure the exposure of the podcast based on the listeners and views. We aim to have at least 15–20 listeners. • We will evaluate the reach versus impressions metrics. To understand these different terms, reach is understood as the number of people who confirmed to have listened to the content, while impressions are the number of times the content showed up on the feed. (Kenan, 2024)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will also evaluate the working-life partner's qualitative feedback on the episodes, gathering information and what they intend to do with the episodes. For example, if they plan to go further with the episodes, and what other topics they would focus on. Ahlquist writes that listener metrics are crucial, it is important to get direct feedback. This can be directly from the target group you aim to engage, as well as creating a dialogue with stakeholders on the objective and methods. This can consist of questions in a formal or informal manner. (Ahlquist, 2020)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achievable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have planned the process and have researched to make the project achievable. We have also found a way to avoid any financial costs and have enough resources to create a podcast promote it and edit the episodes. We also have support from our working life partner who has worked on a podcast project beforehand.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centering the stories and information in an accessible format is one step to bringing life to the experience of mental health and racism in Finland.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Timebound 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project will be implemented in June and will be ready to publish in October. We have created tasks based on our strong points, and we have set deadlines for different tasks to ensure we are on a schedule.

5 PROCESS DESCRIPTION FOR THE PROJECT

We are doing a development-based thesis: a podcast series focusing on the intersection of racism and mental health. The podcast will just be audio. The podcast was developed in two months June and July of 2024 and in this chapter, we provide more insight into the process of creating a podcast series as our thesis project.

5.1 Planning phase

The first thing in planning was to set an effective plan that defines the start and end of the project. With the plan, we can ensure that we finish the task on time, but it is also easier for us to monitor and control our project. (Lock, 2013 pp.39-40)

We started planning our thesis in early 2023, but we faced some challenges that made it difficult to proceed with our podcast idea. After discussing it again within the group we decided to proceed with our podcast idea. The idea came into our mind when we were unsure about whether we should focus on racism or mental health, and our teacher gave us the idea to combine the two. By combining both topics, we wanted the podcast to reflect on how racism is rooted in social constructs and how it is rooted socially, economically, and politically. By using critical race theory known as CRT in the podcast, we wanted to reflect on how deeply race affects power dynamics, injustices, mental health, and how those aspects are normalized in society. (Abrams & Moio, 2009, pp.249-251)

To create a solid foundation for the podcast we started a comprehensive review of existing material regarding our topic and need assessment. Before deciding what the topic of the episode of the podcast was, we needed to determine what is it that the listeners were missing and what was needed. By researching the different services, reading books, journals, material provided by the services, websites, and with the help of the working life partner we determined the missing

information was peer support that is targeted specifically for foreign language speakers.

We needed to form the foundation of the podcast through already existing material to determine what we were doing and who we were doing it for. When designing or managing a project it is important to consider who needs the information and what kind of information they need. (European Commission (2004).

By assessing the needs of the listeners, rather than creating something we assume the listener would like to hear, we could strategically plan episodes that the listeners would want to listen to. (Diori, 2021)

The first step when developing our idea for the podcast was the name of the thesis. We wanted something easy to remember but also to reflect on racism and mental health. After brainstorming for a few weeks, we came up with the name Breaking Barriers. The second step was discussing how many episodes we wanted to record and how long the episodes would be. After meeting and discussing with our working life partner, we came to a mutual understanding about the structure and the length of the thesis. In that meeting, we decided because of time limitations to focus on quality over quantity so we agreed to two episodes the length of the episodes being 20-30 minutes. We also decided to interview a few possible guests before recording the podcast episodes.

We had multiple meetings within the group to discuss how to start since none of us had recorded a podcast or edited one, but we agreed to create a script to ease the recording and editing process.

5.2 SWOT analysis

While planning to start our podcast series, we decided to use a SWOT analysis to pinpoint possible weak points we might encounter and use it to recognize, evaluate, and develop the podcast series. Using SWOT Analysis will help with seeing the project from different perspectives. When creating a podcast for the

first time there can be mishaps, we might encounter but using SWOT analysis (TABLE 2) we can already determine our projects, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats and prepare different ways to find other solutions. (Vanzant,2020, pp. 46–48).

TABLE 2: SWOT analysis before implementation.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and resources of the working life partner who has experience regarding how to make a podcast. • Creating new interesting and accessible ways to engage with the target group and offer knowledge and support. • Commitment from the group members to make the podcast. • Creating a podcast in English for foreign language speakers. • Addressing topics that are important, but not discussed enough.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weaknesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will be discussing sensitive topics, and to keep in mind people's possible triggers. • Time limitations regarding possible interviews since many are on summer holiday. • Busy schedules of the members of the groups since it is the summer holiday when we are implementing and writing the thesis. • First time that the members of this thesis group are editing and recording a podcast.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible opportunities for MIELI Without Borders to develop our podcast and in the future get funded. • Create awareness of the ways racism affects mental health.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not getting listeners for the podcast since we are on a tight schedule and able to get direct feedback from listeners. • Facing technical challenges
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The strengths included the support from our working life partner who had previous experience in recording a podcast, gave us ideas on where to find equipment, and even shared possible locations to record our podcast if the first option was not available. The support gave us a direction to go and was beneficial for us while developing the podcast. Strength also included our member's motivation to try new and different approaches and successfully create a podcast in English for people who do not speak the Finnish language.

Weaknesses included that we still were addressing sensitive topics and we needed to create a safe space that people are comfortable and share possible trigger warnings. It was also important to keep in mind that not everyone feels comfortable talking about their mental health or the racism they have faced. Creating an environment where everyone felt comfortable was our top priority. We wanted to provide the person we interviewed with a safe space to share their opinion in a non-judgmental environment. We went through different guidelines and made it clear that they should share only what they felt comfortable sharing, and we could stop whenever they wanted. Sharing experiences about racism and mental health is not always easy and we wanted everyone to feel safe Without being triggered. We also discussed safe space and our boundaries when recording to avoid anyone feeling uncomfortable and unsafe. (Principles for a Safer Space | YK-Nuoret, n.d.)

Since we also edited and recorded the podcasts in July, we were mindful of the time limitations regarding the people we want to interview since many were on their summer holiday. Additionally, we needed to be accommodating according to their schedules by offering different ways to complete the interview and create a schedule and taking into considerations the member's availability.

As this is the first time for all of us to create and edit a podcast, we took into consideration the time that it will take us to learn the skills for this project. We did research regarding what is needed from us, and did multiple practice runs to avoid as many issues as possible on the implementation day.

Opportunities include possible funding in the future. Since this project will be completely owned by MIELI Without Borders in the future develop the project more and with funding take it to a new level. With MIELI Without Borders and the following, we can make an impact on addressing these topics.

To minimize the threats, we scheduled multiple practice runs to avoid technical challenges and added the making of a social media video to stir up interest for followers to listen to go listen to the podcast.

6 IMPLEMENTATION

This chapter will give more insight into how we applied the plan and how we aimed to achieve the objective. (Applegarth & Posner, 2019, p.82-83)

The focus of the implementation was to keep up with the original plan as much as possible (TABLE 3) will demonstrate a more detailed implementation plan. (Applegarth & Posner, 2019, p.82-83)

The implementation was planned to smoothen the process. When planning the implementation we had to take into consideration location, the equipment that is needed for recording, how to market the podcast using social media, how to interview people for the podcast, what episodes are going to be focused on, and the scripts for the podcast. It was decided that the ownership of the podcast would go to MIELI Without Borders, and they could publish the podcast when they wanted to. After having a meeting with MIELI Without Borders we agreed that the podcast would be published in October of 2024.

6.1 Oodi and equipment

The location we chose was Oodi the Helsinki Central Library opened in 2018. The location was familiar to us all and there was enough space to not only record our podcast but also film our video that was intended for social media. Through Oodi's website, you can reserve spaces for studying and meetings. We reserved rooms for the whole first week of July, the reason for being to practice using the equipment.

The equipment we used was provided by Oodi free of charge. The equipment included four microphones, an audio device mixer, six headphones, and a memory card for saving the recording. The equipment was reserved through a reservation system used in Finland's capital region. All we needed was an identity card and a library card. The equipment came with clear instructions on how to use each item, which were clear and easy to follow.

6.2 Social media video and editing process

For social media, we created a short 19-second video introducing the podcast topic and the hosts as a promo. The video was promoted on MIELI Without Borders social media platforms to encourage their community to listen to our podcast. We filmed clips throughout a day and combined the clips into a video. The video was filmed using an iPhone 15 and edited using a platform called CapCut.

Capcut is an editing app used to edit videos and combine recordings. The app can be downloaded free of charge. Some features cost, but for the social media video and editing, we used the free features.

The podcast recording was also edited using Capcut. We had to record the first episode again because for some reason it only picked up one microphone and the audio therefore was not usable. Re-recording the first episode went well since we were already familiar with the equipment and had the script for the episode. We went through the same process and scheduled a room from Oodi reserving the equipment. The re-recording did not take long and after we finished, we made sure that this time the audio was clear. Mistakes can happen in projects, but it is important to learn from them and improve in the future. (Dobson, 2015, p.158)

Editing the episodes took over a month. The use of scripts lessened the need for editing the recordings. In the editing process, we first listened to the whole recording before doing any editing. We took notes of what we wanted to cut, mistakes, long segments, unnecessary noises, pauses, or awkward silences. No background noises came from the people in the library since we were in a soundproof room. Before recording, we decided that when someone was done speaking, we wait a few seconds to ensure they had finished talking the next person continued. We also had a hand signal for when we wanted to pause the recording. This was important since there were four hosts, and we wanted to make sure we weren't talking over each other.

Once we finished the editing, we listened to the final cut multiple times to make sure the recording was clear, and everybody was comfortable sharing it with the working life partner and the listeners.

6.3 The podcast script

We used a storytelling approach when creating the scripts for the podcast. It was important to create a natural conversation between the hosts where the listeners could relate to the conversation and make sure to prevent it from feeling like a scripted podcast. We decided early in the process that we feel comfortable talking about our own experiences regarding these topics and we wanted to make the podcast relatable for listeners through personal storytelling. By using our own stories in the podcast, we wanted to make an impact on an emotional level. It was our goal to be engaging, authentic, creative, in doing our podcast. method (Clare, 2018 pp. 60-64).

By creating scripts for both episodes and to ensured that the conservation ran smoothly. We created a schedule for how long different segments were going to last. The script included the introduction, main points, and how to end the conversation. We did not include lines for each member since we wanted to be a real conservation rather than a fully scripted podcast where everyone would have had specific lines.

6.4 Interview and questions

In the first proposal and the idea paper, we intended to interview professionals who were in the social and health sector who knew about racism and mental health. However, as we were on a tight schedule, the role of the interview with the professional was instead utilized to formulate the script of the podcast, rather than interviewing them directly on the podcast. Additionally, we realized how important it was to involve someone who had experience in the field. We wanted

the people we interviewed to be people who were working or somehow involved in the field of social and healthcare. We wanted the interview operationalized through the podcast script, to give insight into the field to offer knowledge, their perspective on what they have seen, and how the services can be developed further. By utilizing the interview with the professional to formulate our podcast script, we wanted to advocate for community involvement and how important it is to include those affected in the conversation, rather than assuming what the community needs. We wanted to directly ask the professional based on their experiences in the field regarding racism and mental health, what kind of information we should center the conversation on or what knowledge we can provide. (Ohmer et al., 2022)

We contacted three people whose contacts was provided by MIELI Without Borders. The people we contacted worked in the sector and were open to sharing personal experiences on the podcast. Again, because of the summer holiday, we were only able to interview one person for the podcast. Since we wanted the person, we interviewed to feel comfortable and safe to share whatever they wanted, while in a safe and familiar space. We decided to interview via Zoom rather than while recording the podcast. It was important to keep things anonymous since this was a professional working in the field. We decided to simply refer to the interview as such, in formulating our dialog in the podcast episodes. Before the interview, we had the professional sign a consent form. (Appendix 1)

Before the interview, we sent the questions, to the podcast guests so they had enough time to think about the answer and consider what they felt comfortable answering and what they might not want to share. (Appendix 2 & 3)

TABLE 3: Implementation plan.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>JUNE</u> • Discussing final details with the working life partner, contacting people for interviews, and creating the script and questions. • We will be also researching the topic and familiarizing ourselves with the topics. • Also, we will be creating a table of contents for the thesis and dividing the writing task. • Name of the podcast • Contacting people, we wanted to interview. • Booking the room in Oodi and equipment • Discussing ow many episodes, length of the episodes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implemantation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>JULY - AUGUST</u> • Practicing using the equipment 01.07-07.07.2024. • Recording two episodes 07.07.2024 • Filming a promo for social media platforms. • Editing the recordings and social media video
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalized podcast 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>SEPTEMBER</u> • Podcast ready for working life partner 01.09.2024 and they will have ownership of the podcast and can publish when they want to. • Time for them to listen to episodes and give their feedback.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thesis writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing the thesis 08.07- 28.10.2024 • Presenting it in the seminar 18.11.2024 • Editing and publishing the final version of the thesis 25.11.2024 based on the feedback from the working life. •
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publishing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>OCTOBER</u> • Social media video and both episodes will be published in October.

7 EPISODES

We recorded two episodes. The topic of the episode was chosen together by the students and the working life partner. The first episode is called Peer Support, and the second episode is called What is missing from the field.

We discussed community peer support and how we all see it and experience it. In the podcast, we also shared different challenges in arranging peer support and how to better the services, so everybody can get the help they require. We mentioned the lack of funding, how often peer support is provided by volunteers, and how the existing peer support often groups all the foreign language speakers together and does not take into consideration that people from different backgrounds face different challenges. In terms of volunteering, we offer a critique of how peer support mechanisms in Finland firstly lack sufficient funding, and secondly, heavily rely on volunteers. The discussion further points out that a workforce of volunteers who aren't paid and often lack formal training is detrimental to the workers, in addition to the service users as this work necessitates consistency. Another point we mention is how there are language barriers to what peer support does exist, which contributes to the lack of awareness. We also shared more about community peer support and the support the community can provide for the individual. For example, mentioning community-based and mutual aid mechanisms of peer support that exist such as within local communities. One specific example mentioned was of the Palestine encampment at the University of Helsinki. There, there was a structure of mutual aid, supported by the local community and specifically local Palestinian families. People, there could support each other, brainstorm, and plan actions, while also becoming a place where people could collectively grieve, or at least have a physical place to consistently be in the community. This was quite necessary as the first episode discusses in length about the Palestine encampment as one context specific model of peer support. This encampment was the result of the apartheid in Gaza. It was about what has been happening in Palestine for a much longer period, since 1948. According to Faddoul, what had been happening in Gaza prior to October 2023, had previously been depicted as a genocide in slow-

motion (Faddoul et al., 2024, pp.25-26). Furthermore, according to Khan, & Tinua, on January 26, 2024, the International Court of Justice ruled that what is known as Israel must prevent its forces from committing acts of genocide against Palestinians and allow humanitarian aid into Gaza (Khan, & Tinua, 2024, pp.805-806). The facilitation of the Palestine encampments not only at the University of Helsinki but around the world, is a way that students, faculty, and communities have been showing solidarity with Palestine, as well as demanding Palestinian liberation through structural changes. Through this podcast, we learn that by starting in our communities, through peer support, mutual aid, organizing, and widening our imagination, this is not only possible but necessary to the liberation of Palestinians and therefore all of us.

More detail was stated on how the encampment also facilitated workshops and discussions on social issues, to focus on liberation and interdependence. Overall, this episode covered many different topics, with the intent to focus on topics with either personal connection to or research on.

7.1 Breaking Barriers Episode 1: Peer Support

In the first episode, we talked about peer support and how to define it. The definition we decided on is peer support being people who have shared experiences and can help and offer each other support. There are two categorized peer support groups, where one group emphasizes emotional support which includes counseling-based approaches, and the other group emphasizes more education in the form of information giving. (Covie, & Wallace, 2000, pp. 9-10)

We discussed community peer support and how we all see it and experience it. In the podcast, we also shared different challenges in arranging peer support and how to better the services, so everybody can get the help they want. We mentioned the lack of funding, how often peer support is provided by volunteers, and how the existing peer support often groups all the foreign language speakers together and does not take into consideration that people from different

backgrounds face different challenges. We also shared more about community peer support and the support the community can provide for the individual.

7.2 Breaking Barriers Episode 2: What is missing from the field?

The second episode was about what is missing from the field. In this episode, we discussed systemic racism and its impact it has on mental health, government cuts, work exploitation, lack of recognition of professional qualifications, and a general lack of empathy in care structures. We discussed representation in the field, support, and language barriers. During the episode, we shared more about our experiences with what we have seen and what we find lacking in the field. We began by speaking about white privilege while a host of Caucasian descent discussed one's positionality. Discussion of microaggressions and the impact on mental health was also discussed. We then spoke about the interview with the professional and how the experiences of the clients in the field can differ based on the countries they are from and how those from countries in the Global South have it more difficult than those who are from countries Finnish society deems as more acceptable. This is specifically relevant when we mentioned education qualifications in the podcast episode. Speaking of Finnish policies of the welfare state and those of who are most socially disadvantaged, typically people of migrant background who have been forced from the Global South are most targeted having been deemed as undeserving or lacking in productivity. (Clarke, et.al, 2024 pp.50-51) We then shared our own experiences of why reaching out is difficult at times and what all needs to change regarding services so those who have faced racism feel comfortable sharing their experiences, especially when it affects their mental health. Lastly, we discussed the lack of empathy in terms of mental health in the work culture of Finland. Overall, this episode covered many topics and opened the conversation for critique in potential future episodes.

7.3 Social media promotion video

The process of making the social media promotion video was essential to the podcast formulation. After spending the first hour speaking through the mics, we were able to get comfortable with the process. This is mainly when the video clips were taken. The promotional videos on popular apps are quite short, to begin with, therefore we created to match the expectations. While the video ended up being a mere nineteen seconds, it took significantly longer amount of time to record and choose what moments were a genuine example of the recording process. In retrospect, because it was done at the beginning, some of the moments recorded seemed to have a tone that didn't necessarily match the facial expressions when discussing the content of the episode.

7.4 Publishing

Since our working life partner already previously had published a different podcast on their YouTube channel, they suggested that we publish our podcast there also. Since we also made the promotional video for the MIELI Without Borders platforms, both episodes and social media video were published in October 2024. We decided to use the video to promote it on their social media platforms the first week of October and in the second week it will be public for listeners. The social media video can be found on Instagram and episodes can be found on MIELI Without Borders YouTube account. (APPENDIX 4)

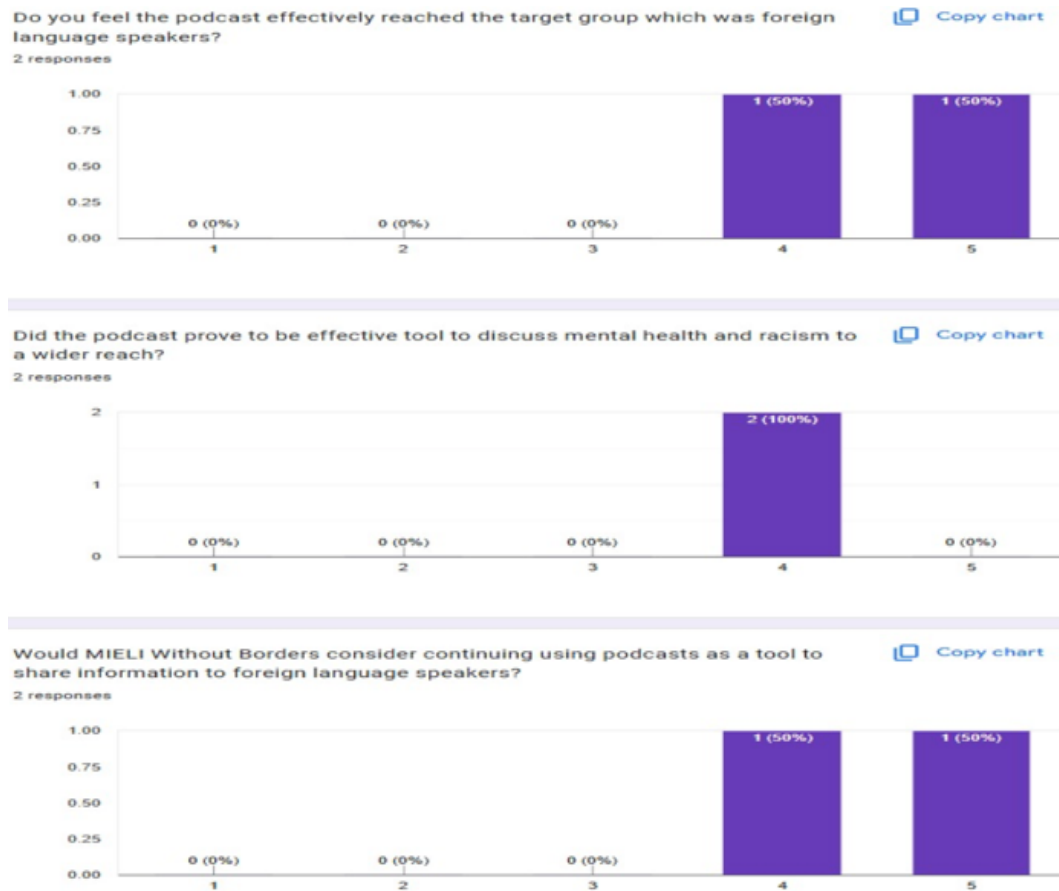
8 FEEDBACK

Due to our timeline, we were not able to make a questionnaire for our podcast listeners so the feedback we evaluated was from our working life partner. We made a Google form of eight questions that were ranked each on a scale of 1-5. APPENDIX 5)

At the end, we also had an open-ended question, so they were able to freely write their comments and thoughts as well. Throughout the process, they were very encouraging and refrained from putting any additional stress on our shoulders. The collaboration in general was successful and smooth. For example, before we recorded anything they reminded us of boundaries and that we don't have to say or do anything that we are not comfortable with.

Two people from MIELI Without Borders responded to our feedback survey. The results showed a positive disposition towards the relevance of the topic as well as satisfaction with the results of the product. Overall, the working life partners' responses were aligned with the students' ideas of how the project turned out and what could have been approved. The objective was to illustrate the use of podcasts to reach the target group, based on the feedback from working life can we say that the objective was reached as MIELI Without Borders would recommend using podcasts to share information. We can determine that the target group was also reached, as we have reached over 15 listeners which was our initial goal regarding views per episode. In our results we received between 40-60 listeners per podcast episode on YouTube Additionally, our social media video also reached over 300 views. The questionnaire feedback shows that MIELI Without Borders would use podcasts as a tool for the target group as it is seen as a more accessible and engaging form. They would consider using the podcast also in the future which indicates that the working life partner is satisfied with the product as shown in the (FIGURE 1-3.)

FIGURE 1-3.



The topics were covered in a way that was useful for listeners. Us students hoped to discuss mental health and racism more, but because of the timeline and amount of episodes we had we had to limit what we could discuss and share in the podcast. The students and working life partners see podcasts as a more accessible and engaging form, and the working life partner would consider using also in the future which indicates their satisfaction with the product. (FIGURE 4-6)

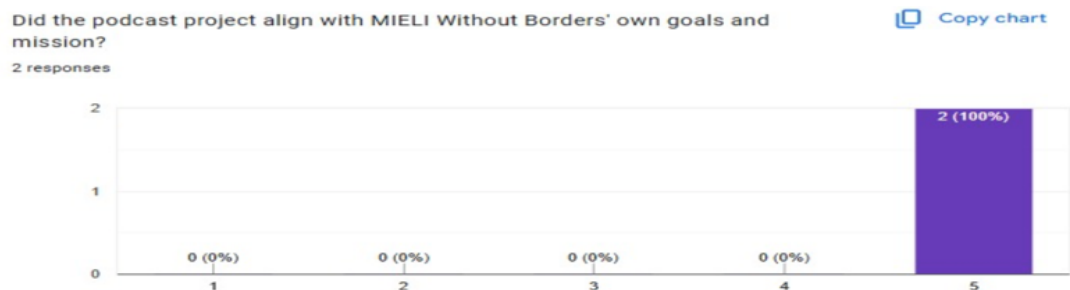
FIGURE 4-6.



We reflected on the results of the podcast by using the same questions we sent to our working life partner. We all agreed that the podcast was an accessible form of a method. We also agreed that we covered useful information on peer support and what is missing from the field, but with more time could have gone more in depth about the topics. The project also was aligned with MIELI Without Border's goals and missions which was important. The podcast could have reached more listeners if we had planned our timeline and marketing better and more effectively and had more time to include listener feedback. Additionally, when reading the feedback in the open questions, there were comments such as: "Perhaps you can use and mention more references that support your statements about service

access and homogeneous needs that the multicultural communities might have.”, “It would be beneficial to name the professional and his field of the profession when you refer to the interview” and “I would love to see the Breaking Barriers podcast continue with guest speakers”. We also thought that we could have covered more examples of the intersection of mental health and racism and provided more references on where we based our information. These were all good structural feedback that gave us good insight into how listeners might have felt after listening to the two episodes. (FIGURE 7-8)

FIGURE 7-8.



What improvements, would you suggest for in the future to better the format of the podcast?

2 responses

Great job, thank you for creating this episode!

Some points for improvement: Perhaps you can use and mention more references that supports your statements about service access and homogeneous needs that the multicultural communities might have. The discussion was relatable and informal, it helps listeners to remain engaged.

What also came to my mind is that it would be beneficial to name the professional and his field of profession when you refer to the interview. Since you recorded only the voice, stating multiple times who is talking/ or clarify by this matter by moderation could help with orientation and clarity.

I would love to see the Breaking Barriers podcast continue with guest speakers from the service sector and of

9 EVALUATION

This chapter will review the evaluation and results. The evaluation will include the process of making the podcast and the final product of it. Episodes will be evaluated using the previous SWOT analysis. (TABLE 4) Secondly, the evaluation of the SWOT analysis will be explained. This will also help us to evaluate if the SMART objective were met, hence why the objectives is presented last.

Our thesis is development-based, which means we created a new product in the form of audio. Our working life partner MIELI Without Borders already had published a few podcast episodes on their social media platform (YouTube) regarding the same topics; migrants, mental health, etc. But ours was not a continuing for that podcast, but a separate two-episode series. From the start, communicating with MIELI Without Borders was successful and they were very supportive of our ideas and gave us quite free hands for the implementation, recording the episodes, filming the promotion video, and editing all of it ourselves.

After our first Zoom meeting with our working life partner, we went ahead with planning the contents of the episodes and reaching out to potential guests. One of our contact people in MIELI Without Borders sent us a list of potential professionals whom we could contact to interview. Initially, we had the idea of interviewing a maximum of three social field professionals to get perspective on our topic which heavily revolved around the intersection of mental health and racism.

We contacted two people, and one of them answered almost immediately which was good due to our tight schedule. We were able to send out the emails a little over two weeks before our recording day, which looking back could have been planned better since there was a high risk, that we wouldn't have had any replies before our recording. There was only one person available for us to interview

taking into consideration our tight schedule. We decided to not wait for other answers since it would have delayed our recording phase.

We ended up having the interview through Zoom. We had a list of questions sent out before the Zoom, so our podcast guest could read them beforehand and just straight away answer them. We wanted to keep their identity anonymous, so in the podcast, we referred to them as a “professional who we interviewed.”

While there was only one person available for us to interview, the Zoom meeting ended up being almost two hours and the podcast guest was very eager to answer the questions broadly. They gave a lot of good insight into the social field aspect and personal experiences and stories. We could have planned the interview better since it was more a monology from the guest than a structured interview for our podcast. We also recorded the interview with consent for ourselves, since one of the group members was not able to join, so they could listen to the recording before we started to record the episodes. Reflecting this could have maybe been avoided if we didn’t have such a tight schedule for the recording part. After the interview, we were able to record the podcast.

Through discussion and interaction with peers (particularly advantageous for students participating in the multiple mentoring or collaborative placement models), students can identify areas of strength and limitation as well as draw on one another to find solutions to problems, share resources, and learn through shared experiences (Reflective Practice and Self-evaluation, 2017)

After each episode, we individually evaluated our input and actions verbally. We reflected on what worked what could have been said and what was necessary. Since we did our project in an audio format, it was harder to find evaluation tools, because we didn’t have a physical workshop for example where we could have asked participants afterward how it went or have online forms, because of the tight schedule. So, we used self-reflection as one of the evaluation methods. We evaluated our success individually and, in a group, to discuss what we succeeded in and what we could do better in future projects. “Student literacy feedback is understanding your strengths and weaknesses and using the feedback to better your work.” (Yan & Carless, 2021)

We used SWOT analysis as the basis of our evaluation to reach our SMART objectives. Before the workshops began, we used SWOT analysis as a method to evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats our workshops might encounter. In this chapter, we will reflect on the outcome of the podcast with the original SWOT assessment we made (TABLE 4). The viewer metric will be used when the podcast is published.

Our objective was to show how to use podcasts in the social and health sector to create a wider reach to clients. We cannot determine the success of the objective since the podcast has not been published and we have not gotten feedback from the working life partner. To measure the success of our objective, we will use the feedback from our working life partner and the overall atmosphere of our group members to determine the outcome. When the podcast is published with viewer metric we can determine if we succeeded in having 15-20 listeners. The results will be published in the final version of the thesis.

Using podcasts as a way of raising awareness of big societal phenomena like mental health and racism. We were able to show that this can also be a way to create engaging content. This also showed there are new cost-effective ways to reach as many people as possible if there is willingness.

TABLE 4: SWOT analysis after implementation.

Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and resources of the working life partner who has experience regarding how to make a podcast. • <i>Working life partner was a big help for example finding our podcast guest and uploading the episodes to their YouTube channel.</i>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating new interesting and accessible ways to engage with the target group and offer knowledge and support. • <i>This was successful since we were able to record the two episodes.</i> • Commitment from the group members to make the podcast. • <i>All the group members were committed throughout the process.</i> • Creating a podcast in English for foreign language speakers. • <i>Both episodes were in English</i> • Addressing topics that are important, but not discussed enough. • <i>Successfully, we discussed many different topics from different perspectives.</i>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will be discussing sensitive topics, and to keep in mind people's possible triggers. • <i>None of the group members were triggered during the recording and we used safe space guidelines in our process.</i> • Time limitations regarding possible interviews since many are on summer holiday. • <i>This was an issue since we were able only to interview one person because of the tight schedule and people being on their summer holidays.</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Busy schedules of the members of the groups since it is the summer holiday when we are implementing and writing the thesis. • <i>Yes, because the recording and interviewing phase was difficult to schedule, and thesis turned out to be harder to write time wise.</i> • First time that the members of this thesis group are editing and recording a podcast. • <i>Yes and no since it was everyone's first time the editing went well. We had issue with recording of the 1 ep that led to re-recording, but recording the 1 episode was not difficult, since we already knew what we were doing.</i>
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible opportunities for MIELI Without Borders to develop our podcast and in the future get funded. • <i>The working life partner gained new content for their platforms and in the future, they can continue the podcast focusing on other topics.</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create awareness to how racism affects mental health. • <i>We were able to talk about the intersection of mental health and racism and created a new tool to spread information to wider audience</i>
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not getting listeners for the podcast since we are on a tight schedule and able to get direct feedback from listeners. • <i>This did not turn out to become a threat. Podcast was released in October, and we were able to have listeners for our podcast, but because of the schedule we did not have feedback from listeners only from working life partner.</i> • Facing technical challenges • <i>This was a threat since we had to re-record the first because the quality of the audio was so bad.</i>

9.1 Results

We reflected ourselves on the results of the podcast by using the same questions we sent to our working life partner. We all agreed that the podcast was an accessible form of a method compared to other known methods. We also agreed that we covered useful information on peer support and what is missing from the field. The project also was aligned with MIELI Without Borders goals and missions. The podcast could have reached more listeners if we would have planned our timeline and marketing better and more effectively.

Through discussion and interaction with peers (particularly advantageous for students participating in the multiple mentoring or collaborative placement models), students can identify areas of strength and limitation as well as draw on one another to find solutions to problems, share resources, and learn through shared experiences (Reflective Practice and Self-evaluation, 2017).

10 ETHICAL CHALLENGES AND RELIABILITY

Before recording, we discussed possible ethical dilemmas we might have in a conversation that is about the intersection of mental health and racism. Our group members came from all different kinds of backgrounds, so it was crucial to reflect on that in the beginning and analyze how that was something we needed to consider before recording. We followed the basic principles of social work by respecting the diverse perspectives on things. We felt it was essential because social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. (Doel, 2022). We also followed the NASW code of ethics to determine our values and principles in this work. (Dadi, 2023). Another consideration is how doing a thorough reflection on the decisions, content, and actions throughout this thesis process is just as important as the outcome itself. This is due to how accountability is an integral part of anti-racist work. In the book *Strategies for Deconstructing Racism in Health and Human Services*, the role in the fields of health and social work requires being both loving and critical of the systems that exist which moves us towards greater accountability. (James, 2016, p.14).

Another aspect of reflecting is recognizing all the parts to learn from through an anti-racist lens. It was vital to recognize that creating this podcast has been one small part and process of a long-term commitment to anti-racist work that is crucial in social services.

As future social service workers, we need to practice anti-racism to understand our clients' everyday problems better, such as structural exclusion and cultural marginalization. (Bartoli, 2013, p. 46). One consideration that should be considered is how the identities of the hosts affect the perspective from which we are speaking. Two of the hosts of this podcast are Caucasian. Reflecting on this on a personal and group level as well as with the working life partner was essential to this process. When speaking about topics under the lens of racism, recognizing our power and privilege is essential. One consideration is how one's own lived experience as a Caucasian person will not experience racism and

therefore will not understand it on a first-person basis. Instead, hosts of Caucasian descent can better rely on experts by experience, or reputable sources. Taking the initiative to do more research specifically in terms of the positionality and context creates a more informed perspective in terms of how to operate not only in the process of making the episode but also in the thesis writing process.

Reflection on this we could have further discussed the group members' different backgrounds and how that affected the outcome of the podcast since our target group was a minority in Finland. In our podcast, while we brought up lived experiences concerning mental health and racism; we could have prioritized furthering our discussion on systemic racism and its impact psychologically.

Time limitation was also an ethical challenge in terms of representation. Due to a tight schedule, only one professional was interviewed, which limited the perspectives we had from professionals in the field. Ideally, more guests from different cultural and professional backgrounds could have been included to provide better ethnically diverse discussion. However, this was something that we knew might happen due to our timeline. Additionally, in the future, the podcast could proceed with this in mind. Time limitations affected the outcome, especially considering the topics of mental health and racism are quite broad. We considered how significant it is that these topics require time, and a considerable amount of effort for them to be adequately discussed. We also understood that we may never be able to discuss these topics adequately but can focus on creating a structure and thoughtful reflection on how this podcast could evolve in the future. All this to facilitate a space for aspects of the topics of mental health and racism that were not yet discussed in this podcast.

10.1 Cultural sensitivity

Cultural sensitivity was one of our challenges since we wanted to make sure we didn't generalize a group of people or fall into too many stereotypes. Also, the fact that we were doing sensitive research it meant that we were trying to make a change in the current social service practices (Haider, S. (2021).

Another challenge we had was that both of our topics separately were already heavily stigmatized, so we needed to keep the conversation in a way that didn't advocate negative stereotypes or reinforce negative stigma.

Also, we tried to give examples for different situations and scenarios, when talking about polarizing topics it is important to give multiple perspectives. In this case we were able to use our own experiences and the information the professional had given us.

10.2 Reliability

We collected a consent form from our podcast guest to make sure they officially agreed for us to quote their experiences and insights. We also tried to be mindful during the interview due to the sensitivity of the subjects. That is also why we elected to send the questions beforehand to them via email because we wanted to create a safer space for them to answer them in Zoom since they knew the questions already. (Appendix 2 & 3)

Another thing that is also important to consider when talking about the reliability of our thesis is that we followed the DIAK guidelines in all aspects of the thesis process. Using academic writing, not using anyone's names, and being transparent about all the phases that occurred in the making. When doing a thesis there has to be a structure that is followed and documented for it to be reliable.

11 CONCLUSION

To conclude, we will summarize the process, determine whether our objectives were met or achieved, and relay how the process is related to the keywords that were chosen. Firstly, to summarize our process, we began by exploring the idea of a development-based thesis in the form of a podcast. With the guidance of our professor, we decided to focus on the intersection of mental health and racism, with the eventual find of our working-life partner MIELI Without Borders. This brought us to our target group of foreign-language speakers in Finland. The intention behind this podcast was to create an accessible form of engagement, for those who have an online connection, on topics that are not always spoken about.

In our process, we conducted background research and consulted with the working-life partner on the creation of themes within the podcast. Peer support and what is missing from the field were the main themes we focused on with perspectives of our own varying experiences, as well as insight from the professional we interviewed. All these tasks were done while balancing the coordination of multiple schedules and aiming for quality podcast content. Employing the use of SMART and SWOT analysis, we anticipated challenges and pinpointed strategies for success. As a group, we were able to complete this project largely due to our supportive working-life partner, the guidance of our thesis supervisors, and our group work commitment. We faced the challenges of scheduling and technical difficulties by thinking ahead with ingenuity on the possible ways to complete the project, regardless.

Through systematic planning, we were able to meet our objective of demonstrating the usage of podcasts to offer insight and address topics that society struggles to discuss. This is exemplified by our podcast having been evaluated with a score average of 4.3 out of 5 via our working-life partner feedback survey. The feedback included exceptional constructive insight that led to the reflection of possible mobilization of the podcast to facilitate direct information on available services. Additionally, the survey included quality

feedback that indicated that our achievement aligned with the goals of our working-life partner, while creating a solid base structure and insight for episodes in the future.

In our decision for key words in this thesis, race and racism were of the first. Considering this podcast's aim is to address the effect of racism, exploring this concept through the lenses of Critical Race Theory (CRT), we recognize both on an individual and in the systemic layers.

Secondly, intersecting with racism in the podcast, mental health as a key concept was utilized in assessing the gaps in the system. Within the podcast episode, there was emphasis on recognizing the value and range of peer support structures in connection to mental health. Delving into the broad impact of structural oppression such as racism, intertwined with its impact on mental health, the podcast serves as a possible method to explore a future of addressing mental health that is rooted in the collective confrontation of systemic oppression.

Podcasts was a key concept and central to our methodology. This process required building knowledge of the production of podcasts, while preparing for the risks of technical challenges before they appeared. Utilizing this method provided an informal discussion style that is often relatable, while addressing topics that require intentionality.

Intersectionality was the framework that brought to the forefront how interconnected systems of oppression are, while revealing how these same systems of oppression impact people differently based on the vast identities that make a person. The framework of intersectionality is widely applicable, tying into the academic research, and to the structure of the podcast episode content.

While we learned many lessons, one of the main ones we learned is that *Breaking Barriers* is one version of breaking an academic mold, all while continuing necessary conversations, with much needed insight into structures and topics to consider when in the process of making future episodes.

12 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

This thesis process was a journey for all of us. While having a back and forth during the idea paper phase, when debating how we should approach our project, we recognized just how important having a clear plan and follow-up would be. Considering the group members' different schedules and working methods was also very important when doing a project of this scale. Recording the podcast and doing the interview were all new experiences we had not had before. Doing something that requires skills and processes outside of general expectations for our thesis showed us that there is also space for creativity in the social field. Overall, we feel that we gained so many new skills and the confidence that we can implement what we learned in our working life as we become social service professionals.

The goal of our project was to offer knowledge and find different ways to discuss the topics society has deemed too difficult to speak about. We were successful in that regard since we were able to create two two-episode podcasts called *Breaking Barriers* and we filmed a short promotional video. We also had the objective which was to be objective is to illustrate the use of podcasts to discuss social and health topics that society has difficulty discussing to reach customers more widely. With the feedback of the working life and the members of the thesis group can we say that the objective was reached,

Our biggest motivation as a group was to prove that there are many ways to create outreach to different target groups besides the most traditional ways. We wanted to address many topics that are not in the general societal conversation. We hope that in the future there will be more funding and marketing towards projects like this, giving rise to new ways to create research-backed content for different target groups.

The thesis was good practice for putting all our studies into use over the years. We learned many different theories, project planning skills, time management, and flexibility. All these skills will be very useful as we continue our journey as social service professionals.

12.1 From student to professional: Sumaya's reflection

This thesis journey has been one of the most rewarding and fulfilling journeys of my life. Writing the thesis was combining all our learning in these years and seeing the changes from being a student to becoming a professional. Using theories and methods that we learned in our studies in this process was great and showed me how much I had learned. While writing the thesis I learned the importance of networking and collaboration with organizations, and I want to thank MIELI Without Borders for helping and guiding us in our thesis journey. I also learned about patience, working in a group, and project management, and I am happy that we had the PMI course to guide us while creating our podcast. Our thesis writing journey was not the easiest and we had obstacles, but we worked through them as a group, and we were able to communicate through challenging times. I would not change anything from our journey and writing a thesis with my friends has been a great experience.

12.1.1 A combination of theory and practice: Nermin's Reflection

This journey of writing and implementing our thesis was a roller coaster for sure, we had ups and downs and twirls from the beginning to the end. It was rewarding in the sense that we got to learn more about ourselves and of course about our topic of interest. Aside from our internships during our studies, this was also a chance to improve our professional identity and the combination of theory and practice. The whole process also taught me the importance of time management and how to find a time when the members of the group are all engaged with different content. For sure a challenging journey to go through with different communication styles but taught me a lot about teamwork and patience which is important in our work.

12.1.2 Evolving professionally: Sofia's Reflection

This thesis process has academically been the most challenging one yet. We learned the hard way how time management and good planning is everything especially when you are working with an organization, so there is a lot of moving parts. We went through a lot of different ideas before ending up in this specific format. I learned that working in a bigger group can also be very challenging due to everyone's different schedules and ways of working. But from this I learned patience and the importance of sharing ideas and support. Overall, the experience of doing a thesis helped me evolve professionally and emotionally and will help me when moving to working life after our studies come to an end. And I want to thank all the people in our group, it was an amazing journey together!

12.1.3 Free Palestine: Annika's Reflection

Writing this thesis was quite a new experience. Having never created a podcast before, and doing it as a thesis no less, this was a format I never thought I'd end up doing. It brought together the aspects of today's technological world and academics. I hope others can find a way to use non-traditional formats during their academic endeavors as well, in the hopes that academia becomes more accessible and based in connections to everyday life. Through this process I learned a lot about planning, patience, and communication. I have learned how interconnected the systems of oppression are that exist. I learned how I value that my future professional development revolves around decolonization. I have learned that even within the field of social work there is a history rooted in colonialism that needs to be confronted. I have learned that dreaming of a world that is liberated, is essential to bringing it to come about. I'm glad I was able to discover many of the things we've learned in the process the last year, with this group. It has also been a great experience working with MIELI Without Borders and seeing how the impact of their work reaches people from many different backgrounds in Finland. After all, what are borders, if not something that is quite arbitrary and artificially made?

12.2 Recommendations

In this chapter, we will discuss what recommendations are possible to consider in the future. As mentioned previously creating a podcast was a new experience for us, but now that we have completed all the phases and published the episodes, we can say that it was a rewarding process.

We hope to inspire future social services students and professionals in the field to think outside the box and consider using different tools such as podcasts in the social field and broaden the reach to the audience. Different digital platforms and social media platforms are nowadays some of the biggest places to reach and engage an audience, so it is time to incorporate the platforms to our advantage as future social service professionals and use these platforms to share knowledge and information with different target groups.

We recommend that the podcast could be translated or even hosted in different languages with different topics. Since our target group was foreign language speakers, we created the podcast in English to make sure the podcast was accessible for foreign language speakers as they were the target group. By including other languages or hosting the podcast with a guest host we can make sure that everyone can listen, and learn, and are not limited by the language barrier.

Initially, there was the idea of centering the podcast on many people from different professional backgrounds as guests. This evolved into what our podcast is currently because of time limitations. While the product serves its own purpose, our further recommendation is to potentially continue with this idea, as it would speak to a wider audience.

We recommend collaborating with other organizations to reach a more diverse audience. By collaborating with other organizations, we can share the message of the podcast to reach a wider audience perhaps beyond our original target group and make a greater impact.

We also recommend including the listener's feedback. By including the listener's feedback, we can improve and better the project. This would also include prioritizing a greater period to collect the listener's feedback.

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APPENDIX 1. Consent form.

**Written consent to use study module assignments in research and development**

Module and assignment name

Person(s) responsible

The results will be published in the development report / research article/ further development work for the project.

I have been told about the purpose of the aforementioned assignment and that the written material will be used in Diak's research and development work. I am aware that participation is voluntary. I am also aware that my identity will remain known only to the researcher(s).

Date

Signature, name in capital letters and student number

APPENDIX 2. Interview questions related to the podcast episode peer support.

1. What do you define as community peer support?
2. How do you describe the available peer support services regarding racism and mental health in Finland?
3. What kind of challenges are there in arranging peer support for foreign language speakers, especially regarding those who have faced racism and have mental health challenges?
4. How can Finland provide better peer support for foreign language speakers?
5. How do you think offering peer support helps those who are facing challenges regarding their mental health?
6. Do you think there is enough peer support available for those who because of racism are having challenges regarding their mental health?

APPENDIX 3. Interview questions related to the podcast episode peer what is missing from the field.

1. What do you think is missing from the field regarding the intersection of mental health and racism in Finland?
2. Do you feel there is enough representation for clients who are foreign language speakers in the field? If not how does the lack of representation present in the field?
3. How do you think available services can fill the gap and reach those who don't have any idea about where they can seek help?
4. How do you think racism is present in the mental health field?
5. Do you have real-life experiences in the field regarding the intersection of racism and mental health?
6. Do you think there are enough services available for those who because of racism are having challenges regarding their mental health?

APPENDIX 4. Links for social media video on Instagram and YouTube account.

<https://www.youtube.com/@MIELwithoutborders?app=desktop>

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/DBazgFstSQg/?igsh=YWI3c2c1aHdhNTM=>

APPENDIX 5. Questions for the working life partners feedback form.

1. Do you feel the podcast effectively reached the target group which was foreign language speakers?
2. Did the podcast prove to be effective tool to discuss mental health and racism to a wider reach?
3. Would MIELI Without Borders consider continuing using podcasts as a tool to share information to foreign language speakers?
4. Was the podcast format more accessible and engaging compared to other forms of methods you've used in the past?
5. Did the podcast cover information on what is missing from the field in a way that was useful to the listeners?
6. Did the podcast cover information on peer support in a way that was useful to the listeners?
7. Did the podcast project align with MIELI Without Borders' own goals and mission?
8. What improvements, would you suggest for in the future to better the format of the podcast?