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**CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES
FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS
IN THE FINNISH JOB MARKET**

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ABSTRACT

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This study examines the foreign students' working life in Finland with a focus on challenges such as language competence, integration, and networking issues as well as opportunities such as IT and engineering employment and government initiatives like Talent Boost. The study employed qualitative student interviews as well as a talent coach interview combined with a literature review that gave a good example from the Netherlands. Findings reveal significant barriers, including a wish for Finnish-language speakers and inadequate professional networks, but also opportunities via university relationships and networking websites. Students put forward better language training and enhanced familiarity with support resources as the top priorities. Suggestions are proposed to increase job opportunities for English-speaking workers, enhance university and government assistance, and facilitate labour market integration for the advantage of both students and the economy. Employer attitudes towards hiring biases should be investigated in future research.

Keywords International students, Challenges, Opportunities

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Table 1: Interview students

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1 INTRODUCTION

This research investigates the job market for international students in Finland by looking at challenges, opportunities, and possible future improvements. Most international students find it hard to get jobs due to language barriers, perceptions of employers, work permit policies, and professional network issues. At the same time, there are emerging opportunities that can increase their employability: government policies aimed at attracting international talent, job openings based on skills, and networking platforms Bista, K. (2018).

1.1 Background & Justification

Many international students face significant challenges in securing employment after arriving in Finland, despite the country's efforts to attract and retain international talent. While Finland actively promotes the integration of international students through various policies and initiatives, the job market remains relatively competitive, with limited opportunities in certain industries. Bista, K. (2018) Factors such as language barriers, employer preferences, and the overall structure of the labor market play a crucial role in shaping employment prospects. Finland's policies, economic conditions, and labor market trends further influence the ability of international students to transition from academic life to professional careers. This study aims to provide valuable insights for universities, policymakers, and students by analyzing the employment landscape, identifying key challenges, and proposing potential solutions. A thorough review of previous literature on international student employment in Finland and other European countries will help contextualize the issue, while also revealing research gaps—such as industry-specific challenges and the impact of Finnish language proficiency on job opportunities. Alho, R., & Helander, M. (2020). By addressing these gaps, this

study will contribute to a deeper understanding of the employment barriers international students face and offer recommendations to improve their integration into the workforce.

2 MAIN OBJECTIVE

This research tends to analyze the working experiences of international students in Finland, identifying the major hindrances, opportunities, and policy implications they face within the job market. International students often face obstacles such as language requirements, employer biases, and work permit restrictions, which greatly limit their job prospects. Cai, Y., & Shumilova, Y. (2015). However, opportunities exist in sectors such as technology and entrepreneurship where international students can leverage their skills. It will also examine the effectiveness of policies that can be enacted to improve employment outcomes, such as language programs, work permits, and university-industry partnerships. In so doing, it identifies those factors that the research will offer for insights for universities, policymakers, and employers in supporting international students to gain better employment.

3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What are the key challenges and obstacles faced by international students in the Finnish job market?

How does the Finnish labor laws and immigration policies affect their job prospects.

What industries offer jobs and better career opportunities for the international students?

How does the native language proficiency impact the job opportunities for English speakers?

4 LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review explores the challenges and opportunities faced by international students in Finland in terms of their employability, language proficiency, cultural adaptation, and integration in the labor market. The review explores determinants that shape their careers, such as workplace experiences, job search strategies, networking, and discrimination. The review also provides insight into the Finnish labor market, government policies, and sectoral demands for skilled professionals. Comparisons with other Schengen countries, especially the Netherlands, help place Finland's approach into perspective. Finally, real case studies from Finnish universities demonstrate successful career paths for foreign students, augmented by a personal experience of survival in the Finnish job market.

4.1 INTERNATIONAL STUDENT

According to Vaarala and Kyckling (2017), an international student is one who is traveling across borders purely for the purpose of studying and is not a citizen or permanent resident of the nation in which they are enrolled. A person who has lived in multiple societies or cultures can also be considered an international student (Välimäe et al., 2014).

It should be noted that the terms "foreign student" and "international student" have different meanings. Students who have a permanent residency permit in the nation where they are studying are considered foreign students, even though they may have come for reasons other than their studies. (Vaarala & Kyckling, 2017; Giang, 2014).

Because of the increasing speed of globalization Internationalization is becoming a key component of many educational institutions' long-term plans. As a result, a growing number of international students are interested in earning degrees outside of their own nations. Malik (2016) Data from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

shows that there were about 5 million international students in 2014, up from 2.1 million in 2000.

Data from OECD nations like Finland and Germany shows that, in spite of the epidemic, the number of international students has grown and is expected to continue growing in the years to come (Gardner, 2021).

In addition to improving the demographics of an aging Western world with a declining labor force, international students have become a highly sought-after resource worldwide as nations have recognized the numerous direct and indirect advantages, they offer to their host nations (Hughes, 2019).

These foreign graduates are known to exhibit a variety of highly valued traits when hired, such as locally recognized credentials, cultural familiarity, proficiency in the host language, and domestically relevant educational qualifications and skills (Pham et al., 2018).

Because international students often contribute scientific and technical research by questioning the status quo and bringing fresh perspectives to subjects, host countries can improve the quality of higher education through their presence which may subsequently result in advancements. Hughes (2019). It has been demonstrated that having international students increases graduates' employability since their exposure to a multicultural and multilingual environment equips them for the global labor market, which frequently results in longer-term commercial partnerships and financial gains. Kralikova (2013).

International students' stimulation of cultural variety can also introduce a fresh set of viewpoints, experiences, and talents to the host nation's workplace. It has been demonstrated that cultural variety in the workplace fosters creativity, innovation, and attributes that are essential to the knowledge economy. (Marconi & Ritzen, 2011)

It's also important to remember the social capital that foreign students contribute to their host nations. Businesses can expand cross-border

idea sharing to expand opportunities for global trade by establishing international contacts. (Bonin and others, 2008).

Due to their familiarity with the nation's educational and administrative systems, international students might be regarded as the best source of highly skilled migrants for the host nation. Compared to other highly skilled migrants, they are more likely to integrate into the host nation since they are familiar with the local culture.

Because of their youth, they are also more likely to start families in the host nation and form relationships with their peers more effectively. Kralikova (2013). Due to their greater mobility compared to the local labor population, international students also facilitate a more effective distribution of human resources in the labor market (Kahanec and Kralikova 2011).

International students have a lot of direct economic, cultural, and demographic impacts on the host nation, but they also have indirect consequences that might be more significant than the direct ones. International students are a crucial tool in the process of welcoming more immigrants to the host nation, claims Kralikova (2013). It has been demonstrated that this not only broadens the host nation's variety but also makes it more accepting and tolerant of diversity in general. The self-confidence of the society is increased by host nations that recognize and welcome the advantages of diversity. Therefore, as societies become more accepting and self-assured, host nations are expected to witness an increase in the number of international students and other highly qualified immigrants are prepared to contribute significantly to society directly (Kralikova, 2013).

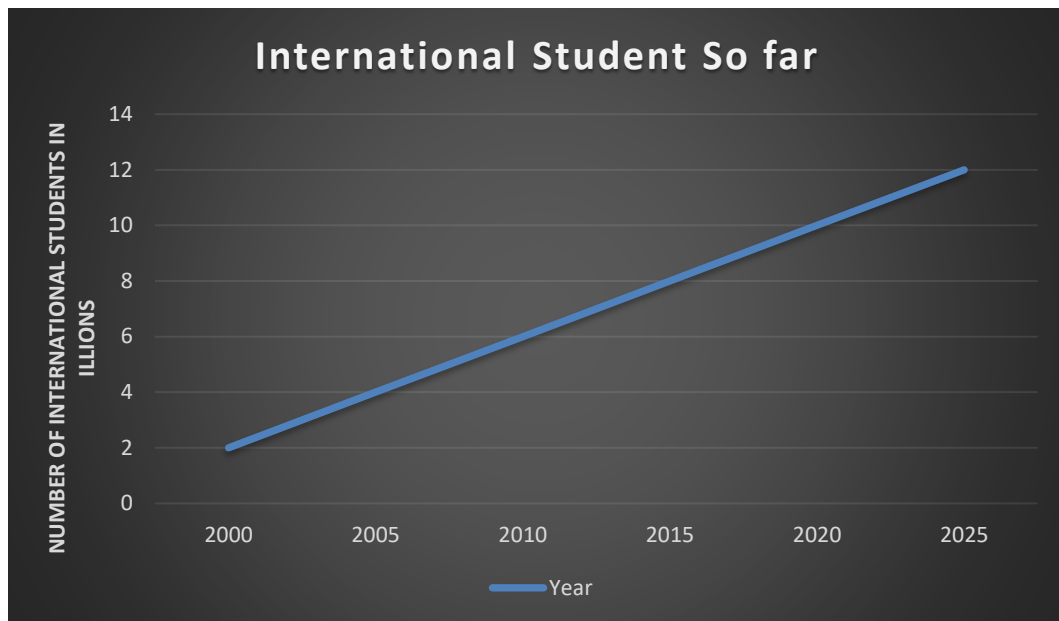


Figure1: International student increased all over the world

4.1.1 INTERNATIONAL STUDENT IN FINLAND

Finland's universities and applied science universities currently have a diversified student body of overseas students. Numerous universities provide **degree programs taught in English**, which makes Finland a desirable choice for students from different nations. International students made up about 20% of Finland's new college enrollment in 2021, according to the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture (2022).

The government of Finland has aggressively encouraged Higher education internationalization. The Ministry of Education and Culture has set aside 15% of university funds to assist internationalization between 2020 and 2024 in recognition of the need to draw in foreign talent due to workforce shortages and a dwindling birth rate. The objectives of this funding are to strengthen support services for international students, foster international collaborations, and increase student mobility (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022).

Retaining foreign students after graduation is a major priority for Finnish universities. Just around 50% of international graduates stay in Finland

for work, according to studies (Mathies & Karhunen, 2019). Universities and the Finnish government are addressing this by enacting laws that facilitate the transfer from education to work. These consist of longer residency permits for recent graduates looking for work, career assistance programs, and closer cooperation between businesses and academic institutions to offer internships while students are enrolled (Business Finland, 2023).

Attracting and integrating overseas students into the workforce is becoming a national priority for Finland as a result of the country's aging population and growing labor deficit. In the upcoming years, it is anticipated that the rivalry for international talent will increase, making Finland's internationalization policy for higher education even more important for long-term economic viability.

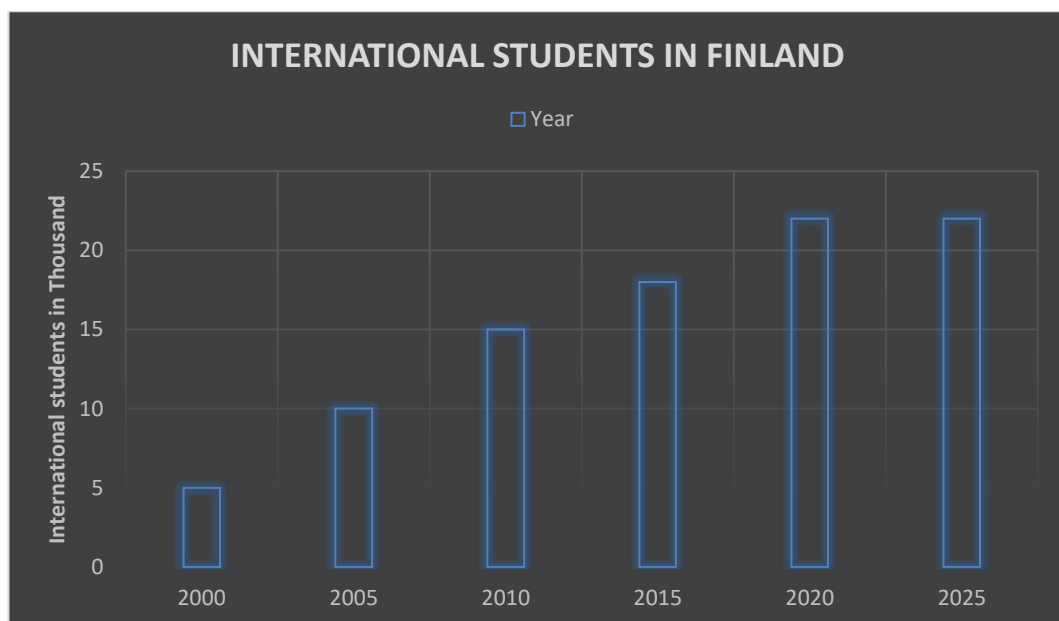


Figure2: International students in Finland

4.2 International students' employability

Employability is defined as a variety of accomplishments, abilities, knowledge, and character traits that are essential for hiring recent graduates and helping them succeed in their line of work, which benefits the workforce, the community, the economy, and the graduates themselves. (Hartz & Nguyen, 2020). It is believed that employability plays a crucial role in keeping overseas students.

Due to the social connections and cultural information, they have already gained while studying, it has been shown that many overseas graduates want to completely integrate into society in addition to staying in their host countries for financial or professional advantages.

Numerous studies demonstrate a connection between the effectiveness of identifying educational backgrounds of both foreign students and the host nation's businesses. As a result, businesses in the host countries are likely to respect the experience that overseas students gain. However, it can be argued that international graduates would be hired more quickly and effectively by companies in their home country rather than their host country due to the numerous practical barriers that have been identified between the labor market of the host country and international students. Cai (2012).

Finding the main obstacles that must be removed for overseas students to find work in the host nation is the main goal of this chapter. While most of the barriers are global in nature, some are peculiar to the host nation. To increase the employability of international students and other highly skilled migrants, the chapter will also concentrate on removing the current obstacles by identifying and cataloguing the best practices.

4.3 Language proficiency

One of the most crucial requirements for employability is having adequate language abilities (Villa et al. 2016). Similar to this, proficiency in Finnish or Swedish is seen as essential to international graduates' employment and assimilation into the Finnish labor market (Majakulma, 2011). However, the employers' stringent language requirements can act as a deterrent to hiring international students.

Many firms claim that language is a major factor in their decision to not hire foreign workers. Less than one-fourth of Finnish employers are ready to hire workers without fluent Finnish language skills, according to data by the Ely Centre (2020). Nearly native proficiency in the Finnish language is deemed necessary for employment by every second employer that participated in the study. Even when the company's working language is English, several businesses have informed colleges that fluency in the Finnish language is required in the job market (Ollanketo, 2018). Thus, a significant obstacle to employment for overseas students is a lack of language proficiency, which also hinders the use and advancement of language abilities. It is debatable if language competence requirements might also be used to cover up bias and discrimination, even though they appear to be a valid condition for employment. Rask (2021).

4.3.1 Overcoming a language barrier

It takes work from employers and higher education institutions in addition to international students to get past the language proficiency barrier. In organizations where the primary concept is that each employee is permitted to use Finnish or English based on the circumstance or preference, Rask (2021) recommends implementing the so-called hybrid model. Additionally, Pratchett (2021) advises employers to emphasize the advantages that foreign students can offer the business, such as how using both Finnish and English together can create added value

because a more representative and diverse group of experts will be involved in planning and decision-making, ultimately improving Finnish working life. The focus should be on realizing that demanding less than fluent Finnish does not imply a reduction in the level of knowledge needed, a change in the organization's overall language, or the necessity to translate all administrative materials. Employers should instead concentrate on modifying the tasks and working environment for an overseas student trainee in a way that will allow them to thrive and fully help your company.

To successfully define the appropriate level of language competence for each role within the company, Tomperi et al. (2021) advise employers to become more familiar with the national and international language proficiency level frameworks, such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (A1-C2) and the Finnish National Certificate of Language Proficiency YKI (1-6). She emphasizes that frequently an A2 or B1 level would be adequate for the position, as opposed to native level C2. Rask (2021) found that half of overseas students were more at ease with a job opening requiring a basic level of language proficiency rather than fluency. When applying for available jobs, 81% of candidates also valued the chance to work in English. Employers are encouraged by Tomperi et al. and Rask (2021) to relax language restrictions in order to draw in more international candidates and diversify the applicant pool.

Rask (2021) also emphasizes the value of providing employer-sponsored language instruction during business hours, since this would improve inclusivity and work-life balance. Additionally, language classes at the high school would align with the student's international study program, according to Tomperi et al. (2021). For example, Finnish for engineers, Finnish for nurses, Finnish for business students, etc. The emphasis should be more on practical speaking and grammar, which are particularly crucial when students enter the workforce after graduation. The Finnish language training system has been criticized for being overly theoretical.

4.4 Cultural acuity

Recruiters typically continue to hire people from similar cultural backgrounds to minimize the possibility of cultural barriers. It is challenging for international students to get employment because of these prevailing beliefs. Studies show that selecting staff with cross-cultural flexibility is becoming increasingly important to employers. Additionally, the study shows that managers place a high importance on intercultural communication abilities, flexibility, sensitivity, and respect for cultural diversity. In 2007, Schaftel et al. Thus, it has been suggested that cultural competence—which is the capacity to work well in cross-cultural environments—is a crucial employability factor for international students. Understanding the host nation's history, culture, customs, and beliefs as well as having the ability to interact with its citizens the host nation are seen as an essential component of cultural competency. Furthermore, the secret to living contentedly and peacefully in a multicultural culture is to comprehend the legal, social, and economic structures of the host nation. (Hartz & Nguyen, 2020).

There has been a long-standing argument that pursuing higher education abroad causes cultural changes. As a result, many international students who study abroad run the danger of experiencing culture shock as they adjust to their new environment (Pyvis & Chapman, 2005). According to others, studying overseas is only done to obtain foreign experience rather than assimilating into the host nation's culture and so renouncing one's own cultural background (Ibrahim, 2017). For example, in addition to the Finnish language, deeply embedded religious and cultural taboos about Finnish social behaviors, lifestyles, sexual morals, social norms, and gender relations may present difficulties for overseas students studying in Finland (Gao, 2017). It should be noted that the likelihood of experiencing culture shock increases with the degree to which an overseas student's cultural heritage deviates from that of the host nation (Ibrahim, 2017).

It is generally accepted that the first stage of learning about a foreign culture is culture shock. In addition to producing enlightening and beneficial results, confronting a new culture can also help international students become more culturally competent and integrate. Nevertheless, it can also cause culture shock, and foreign students may experience difficulties related to their deeply held cultural beliefs and understandings, endangering their ability to integrate and be culturally competent, which can hinder their employability. Additionally, they could create a view that encourages international students to integrate culturally harmoniously during crisis and adjustment phases, making culture shock a significant obstacle to international students' employment worldwide. (Gao, 2017).

4.4.1 Breaking through the cultural competency barrier

Universities have a significant role in promoting integration since, from the viewpoint of international students, the academic environment is vital (Juusola et al., 2021). As research indicates that even a satisfactory level of knowledge about the culture, society, and working life of the host country demonstrates to be better employability, Villa et al. (2016) emphasize the importance of integrating international students into the host country's culture already during studies to address the cultural barriers influencing the employability of these highly skilled migrants. It is the duty of students to become familiar with the host nation's culture during their academic pursuits to comprehend significant customs prior to starting employment. Higher education institutions should, however, facilitate this integration process, for instance, by implementing multicultural projects and group projects in which international and host country students collaborate on projects and exchange cultural information.

A work-life certificate is another tool that Finland has adopted to gauge and improve cultural competency. The international student receives a work life certificate that they can use to demonstrate their competencies

and skills required for their job after demonstrating through a separate test that they have a satisfactory level of knowledge about Finnish culture, society, and working life. Finland has several active national initiatives aimed at enhancing the standing of international migrants with high levels of expertise, including students. By assessing the current state of employment and creating practical tools, action plans, and guidelines for employers and universities to encourage the employment of international students, the University of Helsinki's VALOA project seeks to expand the employment opportunities for international degree students on the Finnish labor market. Employers were urged to seize the opportunities presented by international students, for example, by arranging networking events and providing assistance in language, cultural, and work permit matters. Staff and counselors at higher education institutions were also given the chance to hone their abilities in assisting international degree students in the workforce. (Villa and others, 2016)

According to Mathies and Karhunen (2020), family Relationships, prior experience living in Finland, such as through a student exchange program, and the nation of origin's position within Europe appeared to indicate a permanent stay in Finland. The results corroborate the idea that it will be simpler to adjust to the lifestyle and study and work life in the host nation the more closely the cultures of the home and host countries are similar. Therefore, host nations ought to concentrate on enhancing highly skilled migrants' capacity to assimilate into the labor market and creating an environment that is favorable for their families. particularly for students whose cultures are thought to be too dissimilar from those of the host nations. Paying attention to these elements would probably lessen the likelihood of experiencing culture shock, increasing the number of international students who remain and making contributions to the labor market and community of the host nation.

4.5 Experience in the workplace

The job experience of overseas students has been one of the main issues for universities in the host nations. It has been demonstrated that a lack of work experience hinders overseas students' employability. Finding an internship that would allow students to obtain job experience and learn about the work culture would be the ideal course of action for an overseas student. The operating procedures of the host nation and create beneficial networks for the future. Unfortunately, this is frequently not the case, and students typically apply to known companies in their home countries. (2018, Olanketo).

This is mostly because the labor market is growing more competitive while the conventional routes from graduation to job have been disrupted by the pandemic (Ball, 2021). The labor market is relatively limited, especially in Finland, which can make it more difficult for overseas students to find internships. Because they have valuable work experience that international students might not have, native students are more likely to outperform their international colleagues in terms of employability. Additionally, the employer's readiness to hire is influenced by the international student's prior employment status and the place of origin of their prior work experience. As a result, in the host country, the international student's employment experiences may not be as valuable as they were back home. Giang (2014).

Nykänen and Tynjälä (2012) contend that universities were unable to equip students with the skills that employers needed. Employers have noted that recent graduates lack adequate communication skills and practical knowledge, which they were able to obtain through their jobs rather than their education.

For example, Finnish higher education institutions have come under fire for allegedly lacking the capacity for self-regulation and for not imparting sufficient practical knowledge. Students back up this claim by citing a lack of experience as one of the biggest obstacles to job applications.

Forty-five percent of college students feel unprepared and lack experience to apply for employment or apprenticeships, according to the Prospects Early Careers Survey (2021).

Additionally, the study demonstrates that students comprehend the value of work experience for both them and employers, but struggle to obtain it, which significantly hinders international students' employability.

4.5.1 Overcoming the obstacle of job experience

Villa et al. (2016) stress that higher education institutions must recognize and incorporate the demands and requirements of business life into the curriculum so that students can acquire competencies that match employers' needs in order to guarantee that international students will graduate with sufficient experience to overcome employment barriers.

To better understand the business practices and necessary skill set of the host nation, universities should also make a greater effort to arrange joint projects with local businesses and universities or to host guest lectures featuring representatives of the business world. Additionally, local enterprises might provide international students with more thesis opportunities, increasing their understanding of the customs and culture of the local businesses.

One of the most important ways to address the issue of a lack of relevant experience is to offer summer employment and internships to overseas students. However, some businesses may find it difficult to hire international students, and these perceptions need to change. To overcome this obstacle, for example an operational model for universities that encourages the hiring of international students was created in Finland as part of the KILKAS project, which was created by five applied science universities. In addition to focusing on finding and creating internship forms and practices that consider the unique employment challenges faced by international students as well as the untapped potential of the Finnish

labor market, the project has established an operating model that administers internships and theses for international students. (Ollanketo, 2018). To streamline the hiring process for businesses, Villa et al. (2016) recommend that organizations adopt the idea of group recruiting, in which universities would provide businesses with multiple trainees rather than just one, reducing the resources needed for things like individual workplace introductions.

4.6 Skills for job searching and networking

One of the biggest obstacles to international students' employability is their inability to create networks and seek employment in the host countries. The idea behind networking is establishing, preserving, and making use of relationships, for example, to further one's profession and job.

It has been demonstrated that having the appropriate contacts in the host nation's labor market can lead to employment opportunities. In 2021, Arzamastseva. In the same way Having informal contacts and social networks is another crucial quality for improved employment in Finland (Orjala, 2021). It has been demonstrated that students who are able to network and build a big network of contacts are able to connect with more employers, which has led to a greater number of high-quality job prospects. Employability has been demonstrated.

To be a major obstacle for foreign students without local connections, limiting their options to credentials and abilities earned in their nation of origin (Sofat, 2021). Additionally, most employers expect their international applicants to have strong recommendations and connections, and international students typically interact primarily with other international students, which hinders their ability to integrate into the society and working life of the host nation (Arzamastseva, 2021).

According to bin Hashim (1992), job searching abilities are those required to find work in a competitive labor market. The most frequent obstacles to job-seeking abilities that overseas students encounter, according to Spencer-Rodgers and Cortijo (1998), are the unfamiliarity with the job search procedure, creating a competitive resume that fits the host nation's requirements and style, as well as any linguistic or cultural barriers that may arise during the job interview. Furthermore, it's critical to recognize that different countries may have different standards for job seekers, which makes the process more difficult, particularly for international students who might not be familiar with the local system and regulations. For example, a prevalent feature of the Finnish labor market is that many positions are not posted publicly, which may be unfamiliar to candidates from other countries (Orjala, 2021). The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment's 2017 survey lends credence to the claim that informal hiring is common among Finnish firms. According to the findings, in 2017, just 27% of job searchers in Finland had applied to an open call and found their current position. (2020, Alho).

One definition of a "job search strategy" is a tactic used by job seekers to locate employment. The job-seeking abilities that affect international students' employability can also incorporate a successful job-seeking approach. International students must have a job search strategy to enter the host nation's labor market, according to Alho (2020). The various social connections that overseas students may have made in their host nation can play a significant role in offering important contacts and information. Networking is also a crucial component of the job search strategy.

According to bin Hashim (1992), given the nature of the labor market today, overseas students should understand the value of having a job search strategy. Increased competition for available vacancies means that the most qualified applicants will be given preference. According to a study by Brown and Konrad (2001), a successful job search strategy

is crucial in difficult financial times. This is relevant to the present global pandemic that is driving an economic slowdown. Thus, it may be inferred that a deficiency in networking, job-seeking abilities, and a successful job search approach may result in major obstacles to international students' employment.

4.6.1 Getting past the obstacles of networking and job seeking techniques

Employers and institutions of higher education working together to offer students a variety of advice techniques may be able to help students get beyond obstacles in the workplace. Recent trials involving corporations and higher education institutions to provide business life representatives with mentorship and advice to international students have shown positive outcomes, according to Villa et al. (2016). Additionally, creating a career plan with a career counselor while in school and before entering the workforce is crucial for overseas students to get beyond employment obstacles. The strategy is recommended to omit specific measures, such as how students network with companies and stay in touch with business life while they are in school and instructions for creating a qualitative CV. The student and the university should thereafter keep a careful eye on the plan's development. Additionally, Lee (2016) recommends increased collaboration between career counselors, international student services, employer relations, and alumni associations to establish a community that fosters foreign students' professional growth. Training university employees to meet the demands of overseas students should also receive careful consideration.

Numerous Finnish higher education institutions host workshops and networking activities to help students meet employer representatives from the Finnish workforce and get knowledge of Finnish work culture and laws (Villa et al., 2016).

According to Lee (2016)'s research, students They have also discovered that these gatherings are the most beneficial for networking and job

advancement. Lee (2016) emphasizes how crucial it is to customize workshops, programs, and networking events to meet the demands and specifications of companies and students to maximize students' job search abilities in the host nation and help them connect with the appropriate individuals.

Setting up corporate visits has been a popular advising strategy used by Finland's higher education institutions to introduce overseas students to Finnish businesses and other groups. Additionally, Finland has launched a few initiatives and campaigns aimed at connecting companies and students.

Sitra, Team Finland, Finpro, Amcham Finland, and Me2We are the organizers of Findwork.fi, which focuses on promoting the enables firms to post job openings for which students can apply straight from the ad, so increasing the employment of international students in Finland. The Turku University of Applied Sciences launched the Cosmos Network project, which collaborates with regional SMEs to help international technology students find access to education, internships, and jobs. (2016) Villa et al.

Students must be motivated and diligent to network and acquire pertinent job-seeking abilities. According to Lee (2016), actively participating in career activities and campus life, which helps them develop a personal network, are the "best practices" for international students looking to land a job or internship that might be applied in the workplace search. Showcasing their best academic and professional achievements and using online resources for job searching are other best practices.

4.7 Stereotypes and discrimination

Receptivity from companies, educational institutions, and the host nation's society is also necessary for the employment of overseas students. Prejudices, attitudes, racism, and other forms of discrimination, whether

acknowledged or not, frequently make it difficult for many overseas students to get employment (Kinos & Kirjavainen, 2021). Even though host nations generally acknowledge the advantages of international students and consider them to be the "ideal" immigrants, it has been demonstrated that they are not immune to prejudice, stereotypes, and other forms of mistreatment that immigrants generally encounter (Alho, 2020). For example, a study carried out in Finland by Adam (2016) found that companies there continue to have strong unfavorable attitudes and beliefs of foreign students and other foreign immigrants that must be eradicated.

According to research done in the United States, discrimination against international students is evident when they are denied employment or lose their jobs, a new type of discrimination known as neo-racism. The study's findings demonstrated that American laws prohibiting foreign students from working more than 20 hours a week off campus are discriminatory and limit their options to low-wage jobs. (Soejatminah & Tran, 2019). According to Finnish research, a significant percentage of highly educated immigrants hold occupations that are unrelated to their level of education (Kinos & Kirjavainen, 2021). Another Australian study demonstrates how susceptible international students are because of several obstacles at work, but especially because they don't know enough about their rights.

International students have been observed to accept extremely subpar working conditions since local and foreign students are not in a similar position to bargain. (Soejatminah & Tran, 2019). Therefore, it might be said that unfair rules about permitted working hours force foreign students to take jobs. Below their skill level, which has a major impact on their employability, and a lack of awareness about their rights at work could expose them to discrimination.

The treatment of students from EU/EEA countries differs significantly from that of students from non-EU/EEA countries in the Nordic nations,

permits to live or work are not necessary for con artists. Since their legal right to stay in the host country is dependent on finding work within a certain time frame, residence permit laws and other judicial restrictions for non-EU/EEA students place them in an unfair and difficult position to find employment in a timely manner after graduation. Like in the US, non-EU/EEA students in Finland are subject to weekly work restrictions since they are only permitted to work 25 hours during the semester and full-time during the holidays, but EU/EEA students are unrestricted in their working hours. (2020, Alho).

It is impossible to rule out racial prejudice as a factor affecting overseas students' employability. The findings of a study that was According to Finland, people with Vietnamese, Russian, Estonian, and Somali ancestry have reported experiencing prejudice when looking for work (Alho, 2020). According to research by Pohjanpää et al. (2003), workplaces all over the world exhibit a certain racialized and ethnic hierarchy. According to the study's responses, "western" and "white"-looking workers would not face discrimination, which further supported the idea. Hanassab's (2006) research further demonstrates how susceptible people of color are in the job market.

Additionally, research data from Norway indicates that countless accounts of jobless applicants with foreign names also hindered international students' desire to remain and integrate (Alho, 2020). In a similar vein, a study by Ahmad (2019) found that employers in Finland favor applicants with a European name over those with a non-European one, and they strongly favor Finnish applicants over ethnic candidates. Additionally, a comparable trend has been found in the US as

White-sounding names got 50% more calls than black-sounding ones, claims Brown (2020). Women are still consistently underrepresented as leaders in business, industry, and the public sector, despite several assertions and signs indicating the gender equity gap in the workplace appears to be narrowing. According to research by Sipe et al. (2009)

and Ngo et al. (2003), women perform worse than males on almost all recognized economic metrics. As stated, women suffer from inferiority, particularly in terms of pay advancement, benefits, and working circumstances. Along with having a lower chance of advancement and authority at work, they are also more likely to have low-paying positions that do not match their level of education. Therefore, when looking for work, international students could encounter discrimination based on their gender.

4.7.1 Getting rid of prejudices and discrimination

To get beyond this difficult obstacle influencing international students' employment. According to Mittelmeier and Cockayne (2020), it is critical that institutions of higher learning take proactive steps to combat prejudice and lessen preconceptions. Because they are a part of the students' institutional and work placement experiences, Tran and Vu (2016) emphasize the crucial role that teachers play in transforming and dispelling prejudices about international students. They stress that universities shouldn't duplicate the social unfairness that overseas students already encounter in their communities or at employment. Instead, educators should be aware of the diversity and complexity of the international students, encourage them to pursue their dreams, and take proactive measures to address the stereotypes that are unfair.

Additionally, it has been demonstrated that ongoing support and funding for organizations, campus activities, curricula, and instruction that foster cross-cultural engagement and interaction reduces discrimination on campus (Mittelmeier and Cockayne, 2020). Moreover, they recommend that institutions include international students to their faculty for anti-racism programs and to their current diversity and equality committees. Furthermore, university employees must be trained to recognize and address instances of prejudice in the classroom and on campus. Moreover, one crucial tactic universities could use in the fight against discrimination is the development of culturally responsive systems that include

clear regulations intended to address racism and discrimination when it occurs. show that overseas students are more likely to experience discrimination off campus than on campus. Therefore, community and societal solutions are also necessary for the prevention of discrimination. The responses highlighted policies that encourage openness and the necessity of taking society's receptivity to foreign students into consideration when analyzing the effects of different policy measures on students' willingness to remain in Finland after completing their studies (Juusola et al., 2021). For instance, because stereotyping has its roots in larger society, it is particularly challenging to address. By encouraging democracy, respect for human rights, and civic engagement, societies reduce discrimination. Thus, the host nation's government should make sure that educational institutions give priority to multi-perspective history, language and cultural competencies, and equality of gender. Citizens of the host nation can thus develop the skills necessary for a democratic culture that upholds the idea of inclusivity and accepts everyone as a member of the community.

The Finnish labor market has historically been criticized for being somewhat restricted and rigid, making it unwelcoming to international workers. Therefore, labor market structural adjustments are necessary to provide better employment for overseas students and other highly educated migrants. In addition to various regulatory reforms for work and residency permits, more flexibility in the labor market is sought. Although the Finnish government extended the period for international students to find work following graduation from six months to twelve months to promote integration It is debatable if the time frame is sufficient for finding work. Finland can maintain a talented, global workforce and project itself as a flexible and appealing destination for students from all over the world by enforcing stringent terms and limits that apply to international students.

To reduce workplace discrimination, employers can implement several strategies. Numerous studies have stressed the value of offering staff

members various types of diversity training, including workshops, seminars, and training that focuses on recognizing prejudices, stereotypes, and other types of discriminatory conduct in the workplace. According to Bobek et al. (2018), a lot of discriminatory practices and mindsets are ingrained in young children and across generations, demonstrating the pervasiveness of bias and stereotyping in our thoughts and, consequently, in our actions and thoughts.

Therefore, to foster a more inclusive mindset, it is imperative to intervene through educational events and activities that systematically incorporate the entire business. According to Roberson et al. (2020), different enforcement measures, such as Affirmative action objectives and progress reports that track employee demographics are useful instruments for combating workplace prejudice. There is more diversity in the workforce when anticipated and actual employment rates of minorities, including gender and ethnicity, are continuously monitored. The recruitment of international students could be improved by employing similar strategies. Likewise, it has been demonstrated that identity-blind procedures, which prioritize performance above demographics, shield workers from unconscious biases that their bosses may harbor. It has been demonstrated that established HR structures, in particular those that consider both individual merit and group membership, can change the makeup of corporate workforces at all levels.

4.8 Current Job Trends for International Students in Finland

International students in Finland often seek part-time jobs to support themselves during their studies. While Finland has a strong labor market, many international students initially find work in low-skilled sectors such as cleaning, food service, and gig work due to language barriers and limited professional networks.

1. Cleaning and Hospitality Jobs

One of the most common employment sectors for international students is cleaning services. Many students work in offices, hotels, and shopping centers, as these jobs require minimal Finnish language skills. According to the Finnish Service Sector Employers (Palta), the demand for cleaning staff has remained high, particularly in urban areas like Helsinki, Tampere, and Turku (Palta, 2023).

Similarly, the hospitality sector, including restaurants, cafes, and hotels, employs many international students. Positions such as waiters, kitchen assistants, and hotel staff are readily available, especially in tourist-heavy regions. However, wages in these sectors are relatively low, with an average hourly pay ranging from €9 to €12 (Finnish Hospitality Association, 2023).

2. Gig Economy and Platform-Based Work

- Finland's gig economy has expanded significantly, providing flexible work opportunities for students. Popular gig jobs include:
- Food delivery services (Wolt, Foodora)
- Ride-hailing and transportation services (Uber, Bolt)
- Freelance and digital platform jobs (graphic design, tutoring, IT services)
- These jobs offer flexibility but often come with irregular income and no employment benefits. For instance, food delivery drivers earn around €10-€15 per hour, depending on the number of deliveries and working hours (Wolt, 2023).

3. Retail and Warehouse Work

International students also find jobs in retail stores, supermarkets, and warehouses. Companies like K-Citymarket, Prisma, and Lidl regularly

hire students for positions such as cashiers, shelf stockers, and warehouse workers. Warehouse jobs have seen growth due to the rise in e-commerce and online shopping, with major employers including Posti and DHL. The hourly wage in warehouses ranges between €11 and €15 (Te Services, 2023).

4. IT and Skilled Jobs

For students with technical skills, especially in IT, engineering, and business, Finland offers better-paying part-time jobs and internships. Many international students studying in software development, data science, and cybersecurity secure internships or part-time roles in Finnish tech companies. The average hourly pay in IT-related jobs starts from €15 and can go up to €30, depending on the role and experience (Business Finland, 2023).

4.9 The Netherlands Is Another Schengen Nation That Provides a Good Example

The Netherlands is an intriguing illustration of successful international student integration into the labor market when contrasting Finland's experience with foreign students with that of another Schengen countries.

Proactive Talent Retention Policies: Like Finland, the Netherlands has put in place several measures aimed at luring and keeping international students. For instance, the Netherlands' "Orientation Year" program permits foreign graduates to remain for an extra year following graduation to freely look for employment. By encouraging foreign graduates to look for jobs, this policy increases the likelihood that they will remain in the nation after completing their education.

Multinational Employment Market: The Netherlands has a very diverse workforce, with a sizable portion of foreign workers in important sectors like international trade, finance, and technology. This makes the transition from school to work easier for many overseas students, especially those in STEM professions. This is because of the nation's bilingual populace, open-minded business climate, and solid ties to global markets.

English as the Language of Business: English is the principal language of many businesses, especially international ones, and is widely spoken throughout the Netherlands. Compared to Finland, where Finnish is still necessary for many positions, this greatly lowers the language barrier for foreign students. In the Netherlands, foreign students frequently find employment in a range of fields without having to pick up Dutch right away.

Startup Ecosystem: The Netherlands is now a major location for startups, particularly in urban areas such as Rotterdam and Amsterdam. These firms value creativity, entrepreneurship, and a global viewpoint, and they frequently have more flexible recruiting practices. Startups may not require local language skills, giving international students more flexibility in their work schedules and the opportunity to join a developing business community.

The example of the Netherlands demonstrates how an international job market, a proactive immigration policy, and the availability of English-speaking employment may all contribute to the creation of a friendly environment for international students. The Netherlands has more lenient regulations that facilitate international students' transition from school to work than Finland.

4.10 Prospects for Foreign Students in Finland's Employment Market

Government Programs and Integration of the Labor Market

To draw in and keep foreign talent, the Finnish government has launched several programs. Under the direction of Business Finland, the Talent Boost initiative offers resources like startup finance, mentoring, and job support to assist international students as they enter the workforce (Business Finland, 2023). By providing financial incentives and lowering administrative barriers, this program also encourages Finnish businesses to acquire foreign expertise.

The Startup Visa is another significant program that facilitates the establishment of firms in Finland for foreign entrepreneurs and graduates by streamlining the visa application procedure (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, 2022). By giving access to capital, incubator programs, and networking possibilities inside Finland's flourishing startup industry, this visa promotes entrepreneurship.

Apart from these initiatives, Finland has increased the duration of the post-graduation residency visa from one year to two years, giving foreign graduates extra time to find work (Finnish Immigration Service, 2022). These regulations give overseas students security and a more defined route to long-term employment, which greatly enhances their employment prospects.

Demand for Qualified Personnel in Particular Sectors

Numerous industries in Finland are experiencing a labor shortage, which presents chances for foreign students with the necessary credentials. The following are important industries with a strong demand for skilled workers:

ICT & Technology: International graduates in these subjects have an easier time finding work due to the increasing demand for software developers, cybersecurity professionals, and AI specialists (Finnish Ministry of Employment and the Economy, 2022). The startup scene in Finland, which includes Maria O1 provides chances for qualified professionals in tech-related industries in Helsinki.

Finland needs many nurses, physicians, and other healthcare workers because of its aging population. In the medical industry, foreign graduates frequently have an edge in finding work, particularly if they finish language and qualification recognition programs (OECD, 2021).

Engineering and Manufacturing: Mechanical, electrical, and environmental engineers are highly sought for in Finland's robust industrial sector (Business Finland, 2023). International graduates are aggressively sought after by companies such as Nokia and Kone.

Education and Research: Finland is known for its excellent educational system, which translates into chances in academic and research establishments. International PhD students and researchers can find employment at many universities, frequently with good pay and funding alternatives (Academy of Finland, 2022)

Since many Finnish businesses are actively looking for foreign talent to fill skill gaps, these labor shortages improve the employability of international graduates.

Entrepreneurship and Independent Work

Finland is a desirable location for overseas students interested in entrepreneurship since it has a robust startup environment. With a high ranking in international ease-of-doing-business indexes, the nation has gained recognition for its business-friendly climate (World Bank, 2021).

Graduates from other countries can gain from:

Startup grants from Business Finland, which offer funding for the establishment of new companies. Incubators and co-working spaces like Maria 01 and A Grid provide cash and mentoring to help early-stage firms expand. Aspiring business owners can meet investors and industry experts at networking events and competitions like Slush Helsinki.

According to research, many foreign graduates choose self-employment because challenges in finding conventional work (Shumilova et al., 2020). Entrepreneurship can be a good substitute for traditional job searching, as demonstrated by the success tales of foreign students starting enterprises in Finland (Kauppinen & Tanskanen, 2021).

Industry-University Cooperation: To assist overseas students in integrating into the workforce, numerous Finnish institutions engage with businesses to provide mentorship opportunities, career assistance, and internship programs.

Important University Programs for Foreign Students: Work-integrated learning programs: Universities cooperate with businesses to provide hands-on work experience while students complete their studies (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2021).

Career counseling and job fairs: Institutions like the University of Helsinki and Aalto University host annual career fairs where students can meet with businesses and explore potential options.

Opportunities for internships: A lot of degree programs mandate internships, which raises students' chances of obtaining work following graduation (Airas, 2019).

4.11 Student Success Stories and Case Studies

International students who actively participate in university-industry partnership programs in Finland are more likely to find full-time job following graduation, according to research (Airas, 2019; Shumilova et al., 2020). Through these partnerships, students gain real-world work experience, industry connections, and an understanding of Finnish working culture, all of which increase their employability.

1 Aalto University: Placement in Leading Finnish Companies for Internships

Strong industry relationships have been formed by Aalto University, especially in the fields of business, engineering, and technology. Through the university's career services and internship program, international students have been able to land jobs in prestigious Finnish corporations like:

Nokia: International students with a focus on cybersecurity, software development, and ICT have been employed as interns and then promoted to full-time positions.

Wärtsilä: The business, Aalto University students are actively recruited for research projects and internships by this industry leader in smart technologies and sustainable solutions for the energy and marine sectors.

One of the biggest worldwide engineering firms in Finland, Kone, works with Aalto University to hire foreign students for industrial and mechanical engineering programs.

According to a Business Finland (2023) research, more than 70% of students who finish internships at Finnish businesses go on to secure permanent positions, demonstrating how beneficial these partnerships are for boosting employability.

2 The University of Oulu: Partnerships with Technology Businesses

The University of Oulu, which is situated in a developing center for technology and innovation, has partnered with significant Finnish tech firms to offer internships and practical projects to students. Among the noteworthy partnerships are:

Polar Electro and NVIDIA- In areas including artificial intelligence, embedded systems, and wearable technologies, these businesses provide research projects and internship opportunities to international students (University of Oulu, 2022).

OuluHealth Ecosystem: This program links students with health-tech and startup businesses so they can work on practical healthcare solutions (OuluHealth, 2023).

According to a recent study, university-business partnerships are beneficial because 80% of students who take part in industrial initiatives at the University of Oulu receive employment offers prior to graduation (Ojala et al., 2021).

3 Hanken School of Economics: Programs for Mentoring and Networking

International business students can now engage with Finnish businesses through networking and mentorship programs established by Hanken School of Economics, which is well-known for its strong emphasis on business and finance. Important projects consist of:

Hanken's Corporate Partnership and Internship Program: This program offers compensated internships with prestigious consulting and financial businesses including Deloitte, OP Financial Group, and Nordea for international students (Hanken, 2021).

The Hanken International Talent (HIT) Program connects international students with industry professionals and prospective employers through networking and mentoring (HIT, 2022).

According to research, students who take part in Hanken's networking programs are 65% more likely to obtain a job in Finland than those who only use conventional job applications (Shumilova et al., 2020).

4 LUT University: Achievement in the Energy and Engineering Fields

Connecting foreign engineering students with Finland's green energy and technology sectors has been made possible in large part by Lappeenranta-Lahti University of Technology (LUT).

These energy corporations, Fortum and Neste, provide research-based internships to LUT students, especially in renewable energy and sustainable technologies (LUT University, 2023). Green Campus Open is a university-led program that improves students' employability in the expanding green technology industry by having them collaborate with Finnish businesses on practical sustainability initiatives (LUT Green Campus, 2022). The success of these collaborations is further demonstrated by the fact that 75% of international students participating in industrial projects secure jobs within six months of graduation, according to a survey conducted by LUT University (LUT, 2023).

5 Personal Experience: Navigating the Finnish Job Market as an International Student

Being an international student in Finland has given me direct knowledge of the potential and difficulties that the Finnish labor market presents. Before pursuing my education at Vaasa University of Applied Sciences (VAMK), I first studied at Satakunta University of Applied Sciences

(SAMK). I have actively looked for professional possibilities during my courses to improve my employability and fit in with the Finnish workforce.

As of right now, I have been employed at a cleaning firm since last year as a corporate representative. I have learned a lot about Finnish business procedures, professional networking, and work culture thanks to this employment. Juggling employment and school has proven to be difficult. was a fulfilling experience that helped me hone important leadership, communication, and time management abilities.

The value of networking and aggressive job searching is among the most important lessons I learned from my experience. It takes perseverance to get employment in Finland as an international student because many firms value local knowledge and proficiency in the Finnish language. But I've discovered that overcoming these obstacles can be facilitated by exhibiting a strong work ethic, flexibility, and a desire to fit in at work.

Furthermore, I have gained knowledge of the Finnish labor market, employment laws, and the difficulties faced by foreign employees thanks to my position as a company representative. I have also been able to establish business relationships through this role, which I think will be crucial to furthering my career in Finland.

My experience supports previous studies that highlight the value of internships, part-time work, and professional networks in boosting overseas students' employability (Shumilova et al., 2020). It has reinforced the notion that, despite obstacles like language hurdles and industry-specific demands, there are routes to success for overseas students who are prepared to use the system wisely.

6 Personal Experience of a Talent Coach

The talent coach described his own journey, reflecting on nearly two decades in Finland. He recalled that his journey began as a student, arriving with his mind focused on his studies and career. Unlike the majority who chart their futures with expectations, he approached his journey with a different mindset—one of living in the moment.

As he progressed, he maintained a goal-oriented state of mind but with no expectations as to what his journey would reap. He added that instead of worrying about the future, he liked to remain in the present, seizing opportunity as it came. He attributed his success to never being attuned to anything more than a single thing at any given moment, enabling him to make the most of opportunities that came his way.

Furthermore, he shared valuable advice for global professionals and students. He reiterated four fundamental principles: stay in the moment, be focused, seize opportunities when they arise, and be honest to one's word. To him, these principles not only directed him in his journey in Finland but also significantly helped in his professional growth and success.

7 Unethical Job Search Practices: A Betrayal of Trust and Opportunism

1. A Student Who Betrayed His Boss for Extra Money

A foreign student, initially with a position as a retailer in Finland, had been experiencing financial difficulties while working full-time. As his workload increased and his earnings were insufficient to meet his living costs, he started secretly working as a food delivery man between his shifts. Though he was meant to be completely devoted to his job at the store, he tended to leave early from his allocated shifts or took unauthorized breaks and used that time to make food deliveries for some

extra money. This betrayal not only shattered his employer's trust but also endangered his employment. He managed to work at both jobs for a while, but he began to slip up at the retail job, leading to tension between his boss and him. His employer later found out about his side job, and there was a conflict. Though he was punished and nearly lost his position, he was still in a position to secure another, higher-paying job in the same industry due to his work experience. His story, however, serves as a caution regarding maintaining professional integrity and the risks of losing an employer's trust for short-term financial gains.

2. A Student Who Left His Job for a Higher Paying One After Gaining Experience

Another international student, who had secured a low-level job at a Finnish company, was at first contented with the employment as a stepping stone to be aware of the Finnish work environment. But after gaining experience and improving his skill level, he was not satisfied with the salary and work responsibilities. Instead of talking to his employer regarding career growth or seeking opportunities for promotion within the company, he chose to secretly search for a job that paid more without informing his employer. He stayed at the work for several months as he prepared for interviews at other companies. Once he had secured a new job with improved remuneration, he quit the job abruptly, leaving his employer in a difficult position. This move was deemed to be unprofessional and disrespectful, given that he had achieved some level of trust with the company and left without notice or transition. Although he was able to find a better-paying job, this approach ended up damaging his professional reputation and created a bad impression among potential future employers. His story shows the pitfalls of acting in self-interest without concern for long-term effect on one's business relationships.

5 METHODOLOGIES

There are two most common research approaches used in scientific study are qualitative and quantitative approaches. A qualitative research approach is concerned with data gathering that is based on respondents' individual experiences and opinions whereas a quantitative research approach uses quantifiable previous research data on the topic of research that has been chosen Creswell, J. W. (2014). More generally, the aim of the qualitative research approach is to explain research data in the form of words while quantitative approach focuses on numeric data measures and whether their cause-and-effect relationships are consistent with the phenomenon under studied. (Kumar, 2011).

Research approach chosen for this research is the qualitative approach. This chapter will thus outline the research philosophy, approach, and strategy behind the selected research approach as well as give justification of the chosen method. The chapter will also stress focusing on the data gathering a data analysis employed in this study as well as regard the reliability and validity of the research. (Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. 2018).

5.1 Research philosophy

We need to consider the research philosophy in selecting the research-method. Galliers (1991) defines research philosophy as a perception of the manner how the information about the phenomenon researched should be gathered, analyzed and utilized, whereas Saunders et al., (2007) describes it as a term associated with the construction and nature of knowledge. Research philosophies can be classified into three different cat theories based on the diverse assumptions held by each of them. They are epistemology, ontology, and axiology. Epistemology is based on assumptions and human knowledge. Ontology is based on the

realities encountered and lastly, axiology is based on one's beliefs which determine the research approach. (Bryman, A. 2016).

According to Saunders et al., (2007) several philosophies, also known as positivism, interpretivism, realism, and pragmatism can be attached to each of introduced research philosophy type. The concept of positivism is based on facts and mainly used in quantitative research. Realism, however, stresses a more scientific approach when developing knowledge of a phenomenon and can be used in both qualitative and quantitative research. Pragmatism is grounded on pluralism and practicality in attempting to achieve a solution for a problem. The research philosophy that has been adopted in this research is interpretivism, which concentrates on one's thoughts and perceptions and the influence of social natural and cultural factors and knowledge of the phenomenon is developed through one's interpretations and meanings. Interpretivist approach uses a naturalistic approach of data collection like interviews and observations, which indicates that meanings in the research would be developed towards the end of the research process. In this research philosophy the researcher is also part of study and has some role to play in observing the social world. (Saunders et al., 2007)

Interpretivism was chosen for this research due to its close alignment with the qualitative research design and therefore with the researcher's role of developing a subjective and socially constructed interpretation of the phenomenon under investigation Schwandt, T. A. (2000). The reason for which the interpretivist approach was employed for this research is related to the fact that the experience, the opinions and views of the participants of the study will assist in answering the research question.

5.2 Research approach and strategy

Two most common approaches to scientific research are deductive and inductive. Deductive approach benefits from a research strategy where theory and hypotheses are initially developed and subsequently tested.

The inductive approach will be adopted by this study, that the information will be collected through utilizing the qualitative research method and then observations will be analyzed to develop a theory. In addition to the deductive research method, an exploratory research strategy has also been chosen for this study. The reason for choosing the exploratory research strategy is to utilize open questions with the aim of attaining insightful information of a phenomenon or to construct and understanding of a problem or an issue. Flexibility and adaptability are the exploratory research strengths. Moreover, the method can be used to initially broaden the focus of the study and then narrow it when the research proceeds.

In this study exploratory approach is used in the form of semi-structured interviews, which have also been revealed to be an effective method of acquiring more insightful understanding of explanations and decisions made by the interviewees as well as to develop an understanding of the reasons behind their stated common perceptions and views. Use of semi-structured interviews will also enable probing deeper into the research problem through the utilization of open-ended questions. (Saunders et al., 2007).

As the objective of this study is to determine the challenges international students have faced in their employment and give suggestions on how these challenges could be resolved, this study will be conducted following the qualitative research method and semi-structured interviews. Holding semi-structured interviews provides flexibility during the interview and will allow respondents to talk about their experiences more openly.

5.3 Data Sampling and Collection

The qualitative data for this study were collected through semi-structured interviews with international students and talent coach in Finland Patton, M. Q. (2015). Participants were selected using

a **purposive sampling** approach, targeting students from diverse academic backgrounds to ensure a wide range of experiences regarding employment.

5.3.1 Data Collection Process

Interviews were conducted in a manner that emphasized **saturation**, meaning data collection continued until no new information or themes emerged, thereby ensuring comprehensive insights into participants' experiences. (Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016).

- Interviews were recorded with the consent of participants and transcribed for analysis.
- The interview questions focused on key themes such as employment status, language barriers, cultural adaptation, networking strategies, and experiences of discrimination.

5.3.2 Saturation Focus

The decision to conclude data collection was based on the principle of saturation. This was defined as reaching a point in the data where additional interviews yielded similar insights, reinforcing the robustness of findings Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). Analysis was ongoing during the interview process to monitor this saturation effectively. By prioritizing saturation, the data collected provides a rich, detailed understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by international students in the Finnish job market.

PARTICIPANTS	A	B	C	D
Homeland	Brazil	Turkey	Vietnam	Nepal
Gender	Female	Male	Female	Female

Higher education institute	Satakunta university of Applied Sciences	Vaasa University of Applied Sciences	LAB University of Applied Sciences	Centria University of Applied Sciences
Study	Graduated	Graduated	Graduated	Graduated
Employment	Employed Part-time	Employed Full-time	Employed Full-time	Job seekers

Table 1. Participants of the research

5.4 Reliability and Viability of Data Collection

The information collected during this research is valid and trustworthy due to commitment to method in the process. The study applied qualitative interviews from international students from diverse backgrounds (Brazil, Nepal, Vietnam, and Turkey) and one talent coach to obtain a balanced insight into Finnish job market challenges. Through the use of different opinions, the outcome reflects a broad range of experiences rather than just a single opinion, enhancing credibility of data (Bryman, 2016).

To ensure reliability, open-ended but standardized questions were posed to all participants, providing the liberty to express their individual opinions while ensuring uniformity in data collection. The interviews were analyzed and transcribed in a systematic manner, removing opportunities for misinterpretation or researcher bias (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Thematic analysis also ensured that repeated patterns were noted, and conclusions were not based on single-case events but repeated significant trends.

The credibility of the data is ensured by the relevance of the sample population. The subjects selected are already employed in the Finnish labor market, giving their experiences on time and applicable to the

current employment market situation. The inclusion of a talent coach—a working individual with industry experience—brings in a degree of hands-on experience, aligning the findings with real employment patterns.

In addition, secondary data obtained from scholarly publications, industry reports, and government policies were incorporated to cross-validate interview data. This form of triangulation strengthens the study by ensuring that decisions are made based on several sources of data rather than individual opinions alone (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019).

Even though the research is robust, subjective nature of qualitative data and small sample size may be limitations. However, through keeping the process of interviewing standardized and using secondary data, the research minimizes the limitations and makes the findings valid and transferable to further studies on Finnish international student employability.

5.5 LIMITATIONS RELIABILITY AND VIABILITY

The most crucial elements to analyze in evaluation of the quality of the research are the terms reliability and validity. Saunders et al., (2007) provides the definition of reliability as "the extent to which your data collection techniques or analysis procedures will yield consistent findings". Participant error, biases that are regarding the research subject or participant as well as

observers' bias and mistakes can undermine the reliability of the study. Therefore, in order to guarantee the reliability of the study it is crucial that it attains trustworthiness and quality. The reliability of the research was attained through anonymity because the interviews were conducted through Zoom and participants' names or individual information would not be presented to them throughout the study to ensure that they

volunteered and expressed their extreme experiences, opinions and learnings freely.

Citing Saunders et al., (2007) validity in research "is concerned with whether or not the findings are really about what they appear to be about". History, testing, instrumentation, maturation, mortality and doubt regarding causal pathway form the most applicable to validity of a study. In qualitative research, it is difficult to judge validity because researcher's own ideas and thoughts about international students can affect to the findings. Additionally, as only four interviews were conducted for the study can impact

the validity of this study. However, adequate and in depth literature review utilized as well as findings included and presented in this study justify the validity of the research. The participants in the research were also made to give a good impression about the topic of research by pre-presenting them with interview questions to justify the validity of the research.

The aim of this research is to broaden the perspectives of the existing literature and give new directions, but some limitations exist for the research. Since only five students participated in the study, findings of the study can not be generalized. Further, due to differences in cultural and linguistic contexts of the researcher and interview participants, there always exists a risk that participants of the study interpreted interview questions and terms differently, which further can produce scattered and vague research data.

6 INTERVIEW FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter presents qualitative interview data from four international students, Brazilian, Nepalese, Vietnamese, and Turkish as well as an interview with a talent coach. It aimed to compare their experience in jobs, language, cultural adjustment, networking, and discrimination within the Finnish job market. Interviews were informational, and the

data are saturated to the maximum degree to enhance better comprehension of issues and opportunities in international students in Finland.

6.1 Employment Status and Job Search Experience

Job Search Process: The job search process for international students in Finland is more complex than that of domestic students. It is multi-step and involves job application submissions, cover letter and resume preparation, networking, and interviews. Some international students face difficulties due to language barriers, few professional contacts, and employers' preferences for domestic candidates.

Some of the significant difficulties encountered in the job search process are:

- High competition: Many job applicants vie for the same positions, reducing chances for foreign applicants.
- Employer preference: Finnish employers favor applicants who know Finnish business culture and can speak the language.
- Few English-speaking jobs: Although some fields, like IT, offer English-speaking jobs, some industries require Finnish language proficiency.

Some students manage to navigate by networking, university career guidance, and internship schemes, but others face lengthy job searches with low response rates.

The respondents indicated varying job search experiences depending on the area of study. While IT and healthcare students indicated that they easily found opportunities, marketing and business students experienced more challenges due to Finnish language demands (Fang & Gold, 2019).

Participant response: "It was easy to find a job in IT because most of the jobs are in English. I had to network extensively to get my job, though." (Difficulty: 2/5)

Another participant mentioned: "I have applied to around 60 jobs but received only a few interviews. Many companies require Finnish, even for roles that could be done in English." (Difficulty: 4/5)

A respondent shared: "Marketing roles are very language-dependent. I've been looking for work for eight months with little success." (Difficulty: 5/5)

The theory of job search behavior (Mortensen, 1986) suggests that job seekers optimize their search strategies based on available opportunities and labor market constraints. International students face additional barriers, including employer bias and lack of local work experience (Garcia & Finn, 2019).

The talent coach added that networking is also critical in securing a job, as the majority of jobs are obtained through professional recommendation as compared to through open recruitment. He noted that in Finland, the majority of job ads are accessed via unofficial channels, and employers are keen to hire individuals who are referred by their trusted contacts in their network. This is to note that foreign students who proactively engage in professional networking—on LinkedIn, career fairs, university mentorship programs, or direct industry connections—have a greater likelihood of being employed. The talent coach argued that initiatives such as "Talent Coach Connect" act as an important bridge by linking international graduates with their future employers. He also pointed out that Finnish companies place importance on long-term professional relationships, so networking is not only a career-seeking tool but also a career development and integration into the Finnish labor market strategy.

6.2 Language Barriers:

Language competence is a key factor in the job prospects of foreign students. While English prevails in university and multinational business environments, most employers prefer applicants who speak Finnish or Swedish.

Common issues are:

- Job descriptions: Most job postings explicitly state "Fluent Finnish required" even for positions where English would suffice.
- In-company communication: Even in multinational companies, communication within the organization might still be in Finnish.
- Limited professional terminology: Even students who study Finnish are unable to get the hang of industry terms.

To bridge the language limitations, some enroll in Finnish language studies, but keeping up professionally remains difficult. Others utilize English-speaking jobs in the technology field or work in multinationals.

All participants acknowledged that Finnish proficiency significantly impacts job opportunities (Chiswick & Miller, 2015).

One of the interviewees stated: "In engineering, technical skills are more crucial, but Finnish language helps social integration at work." (Difficulty: 3/5)

Another emphasized: "Some patients like Finnish-speaking nurses, which makes it difficult for foreign healthcare professionals to be accepted." (Difficulty: 4/5)

A language barrier rating scale (1-5) was used in the interviews:

IT field – 2/5 (Minor challenge)

Business Administration – 5/5 (Extreme challenge)

Marketing – 4/5 (Significant challenge)

Some interviewees had done Finnish language studies, but even then they did not feel that proficiency levels were sufficient to work professionally (Yijälä & Luoma, 2019).

One of the interviewees commented: "I learned Finnish language, but it was just for basic communication, not professional." (Difficulty: 3/5)

Krashen's (1982) input hypothesis suggests that second-language acquisition occurs best when exposure is both comprehensible and meaningful. However, in professional settings, linguistic capital theory (Bourdieu, 1991) explains why fluency in a dominant language (Finnish) increases job opportunities.

The talent coach mentioned that although some Finnish companies are English-oriented, there are still more who require workers fluent in Finnish, particularly customer contact jobs such as sales, healthcare, and customer care. He reasoned that language is desirable because talking with customers, patients, and personnel must be effective in order to achieve smooth workplaces and satisfied customers. Also, the majority of advertisements for jobs emphasize Finnish or Swedish as a requirement, even for jobs theoretically within the realm of possibility to carry out in English. As an option, the talent coach strongly recommended that international students make use of Finnish language courses offered by universities and state initiatives. He noted that being able to communicate basic Finnish can be extremely helpful to employability, as it shows commitment to integrating into Finnish society and enhances competitiveness in the job market. While opportunities for English-speaking people exist, particularly in engineering and IT, he emphasized that learning Finnish language skills provides access to more job opportunities in various fields.

6.3 Workplace Integration and Cultural Adaptation:

Acclimatizing to work culture in Finland can be difficult for international students. Finland has a low-context communication culture, therefore directness and efficiency are more valued than indirectness and small talk.

Best adaptation challenges:

- Workplace interaction: Finnish coworkers may not have informal conversations as much as international students from other cultures used to openness expect.
- Workplace organization: Finnish workplaces tend to have flat organizational structures, and employees and managers treat each other as equals. This may be unfamiliar to students who are used to more traditional hierarchical cultures.
- Work-life balance: Work-life balance is greatly emphasized in Finland, and long working hours are uncommon. This may be different from where overtime is common.

Some students do experience culture shock, but workplace mentoring and networking with Finnish colleagues can help with acculturation.

The Finn's taciturnity of working culture was referred to as an issue (Kokkonen & Unkuri, 2022).

As one interviewee said: "People here communicate very directly. It took time to adapt." (Difficulty: 3/5)

Another added: "At first, I was confused that there would not be much small talk, even in offices." (Difficulty: 4/5)

A few participants said that Finnish colleagues and employers helped them with explaining working customs:

One of them commented: "My colleagues were nice and explained things well. IT firms are very international." (Difficulty: 2/5)

6.4 Culture Shock

Most interviewees experienced some kind of culture shock when arriving in Finland (Dahlgren & Söderqvist, 2019).

One of the participants reported: "Social encounters in my home country are much warmer. Finns are more reserved in Finland." (Difficulty: 4/5)

Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory (1980) describes Finland as a low-context, high-individualism culture, where workplace interactions are direct and structured. Oberg's culture shock model (1960) outlines adaptation stages that international students experience.

The talent coach also highlighted that it is extremely necessary to comprehend Finnish work norms such as self-initiative and punctuality to be successful in the workplace. Finnish work culture, he explained, prefers independence, i.e., the employees are expected to take responsibility for their work without having to be monitored all the time. Employers prefer employees who possess the capability to anticipate problems and recommend solutions without waiting for instructions. Additionally, punctuality is highly regarded in Finland, and meetings, along with deadlines, are adhered to rigidly. Lateness or inability to meet deadlines may be viewed as unprofessional and can detrimentally impact career progression. The talent coach also noted that international graduates who can adapt to these expectations early on are more readily assimilated into Finnish working environments and are better positioned to win the trust of employers, thereby improving their long-term career prospects.

6.5 Networking and Job Search Strategies

Networking is essential in job hunting in Finland, yet the majority of international students are disadvantaged by:

Few contacts: Compared to domestic students, international students lack professional connections in Finland.

Differences in networking cultures: Though word-of-mouth referrals might be paramount in recruitment in some cultures, Finland is more formal in application.

Lack of university support: Although there are career services in some universities, many students complain that there are not sufficient mentorship programs or networking events for international students.

Effective networking techniques are:

Participating in career fairs and university job fairs.

Connecting on LinkedIn and sending direct messages to recruiters.

Participating in student organizations that network with Finnish companies.

Having a strong professional network enhances job prospects and enables international students to learn about employer expectations.

Respondents stressed the importance of networking in securing employment (Van den Broek & Smits, 2018).

- One respondent answered: "Being at career fairs and on LinkedIn for networking helped me get my job." (Difficulty: 2/5)
- Another answered: "A professor's recommendation helped me secure my part-time research assistant job." (Difficulty: 3/5)

The talent coach emphasized that networking is one of the most effective ways of job hunting in Finland because the majority of job openings are never publicly advertised but instead filled through internal recommendations and referrals. He pointed out that initiatives like "Talent Coach Connect" play a crucial role in facilitating international students to build industry networks through mentorship, career

guidance, and networking events that provide direct access to employers. For him, Finnish employers often prefer candidates who bring trusted references, implying that personal relationships are a key ingredient in securing a job. He further added that LinkedIn, career fairs, and networking events organized by universities are excellent platforms for international graduates to establish professional connections. Through the use of these resources, students become more accessible to the job market and increase their chances of being employed, even in competitive regions.

6.6 Career Support Provided by University

Fewer interviewees felt that Finnish universities provided insufficient assistance in getting international students placed in the local companies (Bjørnåvold, 2000).

One of them said: "Career events are helpful, but most companies want Finnish students." (Difficulty: 4/5)

Another suggested: "Universities should arrange more mentorship programs linking international students with Finnish professionals." (Difficulty: 3/5).

The talent coach noted that the Finnish universities have mentorship workshops, courses, and internships that are specially designed to support students in professional development. However, many foreign students fail to fully utilize such opportunities, most likely due to ignorance of the programs or finding it difficult to access them. He further noted that mentorship courses offer possible insights into the business world and networking opportunities, while internships provide students with practical exposure and professional networks. Employability is also supported by job searching, CV, and interview workshops. Many international students are not aware of or do not prioritize these programs and, as a result, lose opportunities. It was

recommended by the talent coach that universities can make these services more accessible and raise awareness levels so that international students are motivated and well-aware of these resources.

6.7 Stereotypes and Discrimination

While Finland is an equal and inclusive society, international students occasionally encounter stereotypes and prejudices when they enter the labor market.

Common problems are:

- Name-based discrimination: Some students believe that adding a Finnish-sounding name to a CV will increase the chances of getting an interview.
- Employer attitudes: Some employers assume that international students will not fit in culturally or will experience language problems even when they are highly capable.
- Preferential treatment given to Finnish candidates: Even in English-speaking professions, employers will still prefer homegrown candidates because they understand the domestic business culture.

Although overt discrimination is rare, such hidden prejudices put more obstacles for international students in getting employed.

Direct discrimination against most students did not happen, but some felt subtle biases during job application (Makkonen, 2016).

One respondent stated: "I sense that some companies favor Finnish candidates even for jobs where English is enough." (Difficulty: 4/5)

Another stated: "There are instances when patients favor a Finnish nurse, which can be frustrating." (Difficulty: 5/5)

When asked to comment on what Finnish employers think of international graduates, responses varied (Andersson & Guo, 2009).

One of the respondents said: "In IT, skills are more important than nationality." (Difficulty: 2/5)

Another said: "Some employers think that international students don't know Finnish business culture." (Difficulty: 4/5)

Some believed that a Finnish-sounding name might make the difference in being employed:

One interviewee said: "Some international students say they receive more replies when they give a more 'Finnish' name on their CV." (Difficulty: 5/5).

The talent coach said that biases exist, particularly in sectors where cultural fit is more valued, like customer-facing roles or positions that involve collaboration. He said companies are biased towards Finnish candidates who are deemed to have good cultural fit, particularly in companies where local values, communication style, and social norms are significant. Nevertheless, the talent coach emphasized that global graduates are able to counteract the barriers through strategically employing their networks, acquiring local experience through internships or part-time jobs, and expressing cultural adaptability. By being engaged in Finnish work culture, such as expectations of initiative, punctuality, and straightforwardness, global students are able to show that they are willing and able to fit in and perform well in the local employment market. Additionally, the coach instructed international graduates to focus on networking within the Finnish professional world because good networks have a way of opening doors to opportunities that may not be reached through traditional application means.

6.8 Future and Policy Recommendations

Most international students would want to remain in Finland if only they were able to have stable, interesting jobs. Sadly, language barriers and biases of employers are often significant barriers to long-term jobs.

Most important reasons for students to continue in Finland:

- Jobs available: Some would stay if more jobs were offered that are English-speaking.
- Career prospects: Others feel that career progression is superior for native employees.
- Government actions: Policies to absorb international graduates in the workforce might encourage retention.

Students propose adjustments such as:

- More employment opportunities in English for business and marketing.
- More support from the government for international graduates to find employment.
- Mentorship programs by universities connecting international students with Finnish professionals.
- More internships and trainee positions for international students to have local experience.

If these suggestions are followed, international graduates would have more chances of remaining in Finland, to the advantage of the students and Finnish economy alike.

6.9 Permanent Residence in Finland

In response to the question of whether they would stay in Finland if career development possibilities grew:

Someone replied: "Yes, if more English-language job opportunities existed." (Difficulty: 3/5)

Another said: "Definitely, as long as career improvement possibilities exist." (Difficulty: 2/5)

6.10 Areas to be Improved

Suggestions from respondents included the following:

- More internship chances for overseas students to receive domestic experience.
- More job chances in business and marketing professions within the English language.
- Enhanced government programs to integrate international graduates into the labor force.
- Better mentorship programs among international students and Finnish experts.

The human capital theory (Becker, 1964) suggests that education and skill investments in human capital should make an individual more employable. In the case of international students, however, labor market integration theory (Chiswick & Miller, 2009) gives importance to work experience, social networks, and policy support.

The interviews identify language issues, cultural differences, and networking problems as having a major influence on the employment experiences of international students in Finland. Although certain fields, like IT and healthcare, provide more opportunities, business and marketing graduates face more problems due to Finnish language demands. Solutions to these problems through internships, mentorship, and governmental policies can contribute to the retention of international talent in the Finnish workforce.

6.11 Breaking Barriers

The interviews revealed several significant barriers that face international students to access the Finnish labor market, including language barriers, cultural differences, inadequate networking opportunities, and prejudices. However, the students and talent coach provided several ways of breaking such barriers, which can be helpful to future international graduates in Finland.

1. Language Barriers:

It is true that some found fluency in Finnish crucial for securing a job, particularly in customer service, yet the talent coach pointed out that ****language courses**** offered by universities can help improve language skills and make individuals more employable.

Students actively participating in these language courses found it simpler to communicate with clients and colleagues, thereby improving their employability. Additionally, the coach advised students to begin learning Finnish at an early stage of studies and continue practicing it to promote professional and social integration.

2. Cultural Adaptation: Integration into the Finnish work culture was a common challenge.

Students pointed out that Finland's work culture values self-initiative, clear communication, and punctuality.

The talent coach encouraged the international students to learn and apply these values and use self-initiative in the workplace, which would reflect on better relations with colleagues and supervisors. Students were also encouraged to learn from and look up to their Finnish counterparts in the workplace to integrate and better understand the workplace. Gaining local work experience and showing cultural flexibility also helped bridge this gap.

3. Professional Networking and Connections: Professional networking was listed as one of the most powerful tools against the employment obstacles in Finland. The talent coach emphasized that professional networking on platforms like LinkedIn, career counseling at universities, and career fairs is a sheer necessity.

Those students who actively participated in networking sessions and established connections with professionals working in their field of work were more likely to find job opportunities than those students who applied only online.

Thereafter, university programs such as ****Talent Coach Connect**** can assist students in establishing links with industry professionals to guide them through their career.

4. Bias and Discrimination: Though most of the students reported not experiencing open discrimination, some of them faced unconscious prejudices upon seeking employment, particularly in fields where cultural fit was seen to be a prime factor. This bias was advisable to overcome through prioritizing building relevant local experience and cultural adaptability by the talent coach. Those students who could demonstrate familiarity and conformity with Finnish work culture values and modes of working had improved prospects of acceptance by employers.

The talent coach added that professionalism and patience are the most important thing at this hiring process stage, as overcoming cultural biases takes a while.

5. University Support: Despite limited information regarding available resources, the students were encouraged to make maximum use of university support services such as mentorship programs, internships, and career workshops. The talent coach explained that international students underutilize these services due to a lack of knowledge or awareness of their value. Use of these programs not only provides work experience but also increases the professional network of the student in

Finland. By anticipating and surmounting these barriers with language acquisition, cultural adaptation, networking, and effective utilization of university resources, foreign students can significantly improve their chances of successfully integrating into the Finnish labor market and carving a viable career in the country.

7 SUMMARIES OF INTERVIEWS

From the interviews of four Brazilian, Nepalese, Vietnamese, and Turkish international students, along with a talent coach, there were a few main challenges and opportunities that the international students have in Finland's labor market. The students all gave their stories about how they navigated through the job seeking process, the language barrier, adapting to a new culture, and integrating into the workplace.

Most of the students reported that it was difficult to get a job, particularly in non-technical fields like marketing and business, due to the stiff competition for Finnish language proficiency. While some fields, like IT, engineering, and healthcare, were more open to foreign expertise, most of the students found it challenging to get through the application process and enjoyed little success at getting interviews or job offers. Networking was a necessary strategy that students emphasized, mentioning the need for Finnish connections on LinkedIn, career activities, and college activities. The language issue was a common problem, with many students confessing that Finnish competencies were of great importance in the acquisition of jobs, especially customer-facing roles. The talent coach further noted that even though some companies use English, even most employers still prefer Finnish-speaking workers.

Cultural adaptation at the workplace was another main issue, with the student's noting challenges in adjusting to the direct communication style, need to be punctual, and initiative promoted in Finnish workplaces. The interviews also indicated ignorance on the part of the stu-

dents concerning the facilities provided by the university, i.e., mentorship schemes, internships, and workshops, that could improve their chances in the job market.

Foreign job applicants' discrimination and prejudice were also pinpointed, particularly in industries where cultural compatibility is an asset. However, the talent coach insisted that solving these problems through networking, gaining experience locally, and being culturally flexible is crucial to the success of international students.

Overall, the report highlighted the need for better support from employers, government programs, and universities to aid international students in the Finnish labor market. Improvements in internship experiences, mentorship, and growing English-speaking job opportunities were proposed to retain more international talent in Finland.

Barrier	Description	Difficulty Level (0-5)
Language Barrier	Insufficient knowledge of Finnish or Swedish, which impacts job opportunities, especially in customer-facing roles.	4
Cultural Adaptation	Difficulty in adjusting to Finnish workplace culture, which values punctuality, direct communication, and self-initiative.	3
Networking	Challenges in understanding how to build a professional network in Finland and lack of knowledge on available networking opportunities.	3
Job Search Process	Difficulty in finding a job, especially in industries that require Finnish language skills or local work experience.	4
Discrimination/Bias	Subtle biases against international students due to their background, which might affect their chances of being hired.	3

University Support	Limited awareness or utilization of university resources like mentorship programs, internships, and career services.	2
Cultural Fit	Challenges in adapting to the work environment or being perceived as a good cultural fit by employers in Finland.	3
Work Experience	Difficulty in securing a job without local work experience, which is often required for most roles in Finland.	5
Recognition of Foreign Qualifications	International qualifications might not be immediately recognized by Finnish employers, making it harder to land certain jobs.	4

Table 2: Language barriers

8 CONCLUSIONS

This study examined the work life of foreign students in Finland, the main challenges, the effects of labor law and immigration policy, opportunities in the sectors, and the relevance of Finnish language proficiency. The findings give a comprehensive picture of the Finnish labor market from the perspective of foreign graduates and highlight areas of improvement in policy and institutional practice.

1. What are the biggest challenges and obstacles for international students in the Finnish labor market?

International students in Finland face a range of well-documented challenges, the most serious of which are language problems, limited access to professional contacts, lack of home-based work experience, and overt or covert discrimination (Alho, 2020; Rask, 2021). Finnish employers have a tendency to require fluency in Finnish even for jobs that are possible to do in English, limiting access for otherwise qualified candidates (Ollanketo, 2018).

Moreover, career search strategies such as informal networking are less accessible to foreign students who lack local connections (Arzamastseva, 2021). Ethnicity, gender, and nationality discriminatory recruitment and unconscious ethnicity, gender, and nationality discrimination also complicate career progress (Ahmad, 2019; Kinos & Kirjavainen, 2021). These findings were corroborated by interview evidence from Brazilian, Turkish, Vietnamese, and Nepali students, who cited language and limited contacts as main obstacles.

2. How do Finnish labor law and immigration policy affect their career prospects?

While recent reforms have sought to support international graduates—e.g., extending the post-graduation work search permit from one to two years (Finnish Immigration Service, 2022)—there remain problems. Non-EU/EEA students remain capped at 25 hours a week of work during semesters, limiting their scope for gaining meaningful work experience before graduation (Alho, 2020).

Additionally, employers' anxieties concerning bureaucratic barriers or future employability are but one of the reasons international students' career opportunities are hindered (Shumilova et al., 2020). As much as initiatives like Talent Boost vow to support labour integration (Business Finland, 2023), greater policy consistency in its implementation and closer collaboration between institutions and employers are needed.

3. In which sectors is work and better career prospects for the international student offered?

The best prospects for international students are ICT (technology), engineering, health care, and startup entrepreneurship. These fields are more open to English-speaking professionals and are apt to have pointed

skill gaps (Business Finland, 2023; Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, 2022).

Case studies from Aalto, Oulu, and LUT universities provide examples showing that international students placed in industry and internship projects have a greater likelihood of getting employed after graduation (Airas, 2019; Shumilova et al., 2020). Programs like Hanken's HIT and the Green Campus Open at LUT are examples of how university-industry partnerships can directly boost international employability (Hanken, 2021; LUT, 2023). Conversely, markets like public services and marketing require Finnish speakers, making access even more difficult for (Fang & Gold, 2019).

4. In how many ways do the native language skills influence career opportunities for English speakers?

Language proficiency is probably the most significant factor in obtaining a job. While some sectors allow working in English, especially in IT and engineering, employers still want or expect Finnish language proficiency (Majakulma, 2011; Ely Centre, 2020). This is still so even where the work could be ideally functional in English, acting as a de facto indirect exclusion (Rask, 2021).

Interviewed students confirmed that even basic or intermediate-level Finnish language abilities can improve job prospects, and talent coaches emphasized the need for tailored language courses (Tomperi et al., 2021). Studies also show that employers could be more understanding by recognizing that some jobs do not have to have native-level Finnish (Villa et al., 2016). Combining language training in degree courses and promoting hybrid-language workplaces would easily eliminate this hindrance.

Final Thoughts

Finnish work is at both deep challenge and high opportunity for the foreign student community. While serious barriers such as language skills, humble networks, and employer biases persist, study programs, new government policy, and in-demand sectors such as ICT and healthcare are available as career paths. Finnish society can make sure that it really maximizes benefits from its foreign talent pool if it keeps addressing structural limitations while developing a richer, language-sensitive, and networking-oriented work environment.

DO'S

- Do Network Actively
- Do Take Advantage of University Resources
- Do Improve Your Language Skills
- Do Stay Persistent
- Do Be Professional and Honest
- Do Tailor Your Applications
- Do Seek Feedback

- Don't Rely Only on Open Applications
- Don't Ignore Cultural Norms
 - Don't Compromise Your Integrity
 - Don't Be Discouraged by Language Barriers.
 - Don't Neglect the Importance of a Good Work-Life Balance
 - Don't Underestimate Soft Skills
 - Don't Expect Immediate Results

Don'ts

Figure4: DO's and Don'ts

9 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS TOWARDS THE ENHANCEMENT OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENT EMPLOYABILITY

Managers, policymakers, and universities must take the initiative to enhance the employability of foreign students in Finland. Employers can foster workplace diversity by implementing inclusion programs and removing recruitment biases through formalized recruitment procedures. Language barrier elimination through Finnish language training can help in integration, while cross-cultural training can aid adaptation to workplace culture among international workers. Universities must establish closer collaborations with business to provide internships, mentorship, and networking opportunities because networking remains a key job placement driver. Referral-based recruitment and participation in career fairs can also be used by employers to engage international professionals. Government programs supporting business must also be increased to enable work-integrated learning and entrepreneurship programs. Through these tactics, organizations can generate a more inclusive employment market for both global professionals and Finland's workforce diversity.

10 FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH

For future research, I would extend this study by focusing on the employer's perspective of hiring international students in Finland. While the current study has primarily examined the challenges of international graduates, it has also shed some light on unethical job search behavior, such as fraudulent job application and workplace misconduct, that can influence employer trust negatively. A deeper understanding of how Finnish employers perceive and respond to such behaviors would be

beneficial to understand in considering their recruitment decision, expectations, and concerns regarding workforce integration.

In addition, a study of recruitment biases and work experiences from the employer's perspective might shed light on why certain industries are still reluctant to recruit international talent even when a high-skilled workforce is becoming a growing demand. Knowing how cultural differences, linguistic barriers, and workplace ethics affect the recruitment process would help complement policy proposals and real-world solutions that serve both job seekers and employers.

By shifting the focus to the employer's perspective, more efficient training programs, moral practices, and networking arrangements can be devised by future research to more solidly cement employer-employee relations and deliver a better, more balanced, and more sustainable labor market for Finnish international graduates.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview questions for students

1. What is your current job status? (Employed, unemployed, searching, etc.)
2. Can you describe your job search experience during and after your studies?
3. How many job applications have you submitted in Finland, and what has been the response rate?
4. Have you received feedback from Finnish employers about why you were/weren't hired?
5. Do you speak Finnish or Swedish? If yes, at what level?
6. Have you faced difficulties securing a job due to language barriers? (Rate from 1 to 5, 1 = Not challenging at all, 5 = Extremely challenging)
7. Have you taken any language courses to improve your Finnish/Swedish proficiency? If yes, did they help in your job search?
8. Would you be more likely to stay in Finland if there were more job opportunities available in English?
9. Have you faced challenges in adapting to Finnish workplace culture? If yes, what were they?
10. Have Finnish employers or colleagues helped you understand workplace expectations and norms?
11. Do you feel that understanding Finnish culture, including economic, legal, and social systems, is important for employment success?
12. Have you ever experienced culture shock while studying or working in Finland?
13. Have personal connections made during your studies helped you find job opportunities?
14. What platforms (LinkedIn, job fairs, university events, career services) have been the most helpful in your job search?

15. Have Finnish universities provided enough support (mentorship programs, internships, workshops) to help you build a professional network?
16. Have you ever felt discriminated against during job applications or interviews? If yes, could you describe the situation?
17. Do you think having a Finnish name would have made a difference in your job search? Why or why not?
18. In your experience, how do Finnish employers perceive international graduates compared to Finnish candidates?
19. If you secured a stable job, would you consider staying in Finland long-term? Why or why not?
20. What improvements (from universities, employers, or the government) would encourage more international graduates to stay and work in Finland?

Appendix 2 Interview questions for talent coach

1. What are the biggest challenges international graduates face when seeking jobs in Finland?
2. Which industries or job sectors have the highest demand for international professionals?
3. How important is networking in securing a job, and what are the best ways to build a professional network in Finland?
4. How crucial is Finnish or Swedish language proficiency for employment, and are there opportunities for English-only speakers?
5. What cultural differences should international job seekers be aware of in Finnish workplaces?
6. What career support (mentorship, internships, workshops) do Finnish universities provide for international students?
7. Are there specific government programs or initiatives to help international graduates enter the job market?
8. Have you noticed biases against international job seekers in recruitment, and how can they overcome them?

9. Does having a Finnish name or background significantly impact job application success?
10. What key improvements from universities, employers, or the government would help retain more international talent in Finland?