

Recruiting the Highly Sensitive Person: Considerations and Their Significance

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<p>Diversity is extensively considered as an important principle in human resource management, especially in current times. A branch of diversity, cognitive diversity, is perhaps not as widely discussed, but is to be the central theme of this thesis. This research-based thesis aims to study the minority of the world's population, who identify as being highly sensitive persons. In relation to the human resources context, this thesis discusses ideas connected to recruitment and selection as experienced by highly sensitive people, and how current processes and implementations can be improved to consider this minority. Based on statistical research, 15-20% of the world's population identify as being highly sensitive (Aron 1996, xvi-xxii).</p> <p>The thesis is divided into a theoretical and empirical section. The theoretical portion aims to look at mainly the following three topics and related concepts: cognitive diversity, its benefits and relation to a socially responsible organization, models of recruitment and selection that are of interest to the study as well as, of course, defining the characteristics of highly sensitive people and how those may appear in workplace situations.</p> <p>The empirical portion of this research analysed the perspectives of highly sensitive persons to current recruitment processes through the use of a structured survey with both qualitative and quantitative questions, including perspectives on the effectiveness of recruitment methods (i.e. interviews, job advertisements) and their elements, the aspects that draw highly sensitive persons to apply and also that which discourages [them] from applying, and why this is of notable significance to recruiters.</p> <p>The main platform for collecting the survey results was through highly sensitive persons groups on Facebook. This was to try to keep the target audience as relevant as possible, and to through that, eliminate possible answers that may sway the truthfulness of the survey answers and thereby this research. However, personal social media platforms were also used to distribute the survey, highlighting of course the importance of the respondents being only highly sensitive. Some were also contacted directly when their interaction with highly sensitive social media platforms was noted. The answers were analysed with the use Excel, where the information from Webporol was directly transferred. Interpretative verbal analysis was used for qualitative questions. The total number of respondents was 103.</p> <p>The overall conclusion of the results was that highly sensitive people have very distinct preferences when it comes to recruitment and selection practices from the applicant's perspective. Moreover, that the traits of highly sensitive persons could directly be linked to the results of the survey. In consideration of recommendations, the summarizing conclusion would be the personalization and effort in limiting stigmatization in processes of recruitment and selection, to make human resources processes more inclusive and expansive in attracting a cognitively diverse pool of talent, are of extreme importance. From the empirical results, it can also be said that a communicative research and selection process is not only valued by highly sensitive people but can be considered crucial. The minimizing of 'guess work' from the applicant's perspective is also a significant consideration for recruiters and managers.</p>	
Keywords The highly sensitive person, recruitment and selection, cognitive diversity, emotional intelligence	

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1 Introduction

This thesis is a research-based thesis written as a component of the bachelor's degree programme in International Business at Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. As my chosen field of specialisation is human resources, the thesis takes a focus in the field thereof. The primary chapter describes the background of the study, its importance and relevance in current times, the research question and its objective as well as highlights the main concepts of the research to its reader.

1.1 Background

The basis of this research is established on theories of the highly sensitive person, as well as various models in relation to recruitment and selection. Psychological theories, which are in coherence to these two central themes, will also be considered. Diversity, namely cognitive diversity, will also be studied in relation to the above-mentioned topics.

Doctor Elaine Aron is the primary and pioneer researcher of the highly sensitive person, and theories and frameworks from her 1996 book, *the Highly Sensitive Person*, are used throughout the scope of this thesis. Considering this, the research on the highly sensitive person is all quite recent. Aron (1996, xvii-xxii) uses the acronym 'DOES' to describe the foundational characteristics and behaviours of highly sensitive persons, including depth of processing, overstimulation, emotional reactivity and sensing the subtle. These four elements will be used as guiding principles in defining highly sensitive persons in their relation to recruitment and selection processes.

A highly sensitive person can be described as an individual that absorbs, feels and reacts to as well as interprets physical, mental and emotional information, even if subtle, at a heightened depth. It has been determined on the basis of research that roughly 15-20% of the population are highly sensitive. (Aron 1996, xvi-xxii.) This trivial fact portrays, to an extent, the importance of considering this group in terms of their employability. This thesis argues this importance in the context of cognitive diversity and the valuable traits of highly sensitive persons and why this is of interest to recruiters in expanding the talent pool which they attract. More than ethnic background or sex, this research wants to consider the importance of a diverse mental structure in an organization, including the highly sensitive person (D'Souza 7 October 2020).

Research on recruitment and selection is extensively available. However, the main model used for the analysis of the various steps of the recruitment and selection process will be based on Gareth Robert's (1997, 5) process flow. This model will interpret the steps of recruitment and selection which hold significance. These steps will further be supported with

the test perceptions model as developed by Ployhart and Harold to review well-working processes in recruitment from the side of the applicant (2004,85). It should also be taken into consideration that as per research completed by Jaeger (2004, 5), a survey completed by 150 highly sensitive people produced the result that in general, work for these individuals is unsatisfying. This research hopes to look at ways in which highly sensitive people approach the application of jobs, and in doing so, to perhaps give some guidance in what can be done from the highly sensitive persons as well as the recruiters perspective to possibly aid the mentioned end result of a survey as such.

Although the highly sensitive person at the workplace has been studied to some extent, the experience of the highly sensitive person in the recruitment and selection process has not specifically been studied, at least not extensively. Jaeger (2004, 2) who has perhaps written the most notable piece of literature in work and its relation to the highly sensitive person, *Making Work Work for the Highly Sensitive Person*, even mentions at the beginning of his book that “this book is not about how to interview and land a job.” While this thesis does not aim to give practical guidelines in finding work for the highly sensitive person, it is evident that this kind of research, focusing namely on recruitment and selection of highly sensitive persons, is still at a shortage. As a highly sensitive person myself, I find this subject of increased interest and importance to shed light upon.

Although components of this research have a solid knowledge base, the content of this research can be considered to be largely untapped territory in a holistic perspective.

1.2 Research problem and investigative questions

The objective of this thesis is to educate recruiters and managers on the importance of considering cognitive diversity, specifically that of highly sensitive persons, in the processes of recruitment and selection. In addition, I hope to educate and bring light to highly sensitive persons on what works for them and what they need to consider for themselves regarding elements of the same processes.

The research question investigated is:

RQ. What makes a successful recruitment process for highly sensitive people?

The research question was divided into the following investigative questions:

1. What methods should be utilized in the recruitment and selection of highly sensitive persons?
2. What methods should not be utilized in the recruitment and selection of highly sensitive persons?
3. What aspects of the positions and companies encourage highly sensitive persons to apply?

4. What aspects of the positions and companies discourage highly sensitive persons from applying?
5. What added value do highly sensitive persons see themselves bringing to a position and a company?
6. What recommendations can be made to recruiters/HR regarding the recruitment of highly sensitive persons?

The overlay matrix below presents the investigative questions, related theoretical framework components, the research methods used and the related chapter where the results are reported. As this research is for International Business, the international aspect will be taken into consideration in the distribution of the survey to nationalities across the world, namely, to diversify answers, but to further prove that high sensitivity is a worldwide phenomenon and impacts employees and employers everywhere.

Table 1. Overlay matrix

Investigative question	Theoretical Framework	Research Methods	Results (chapter)
IQ 1: What methods should be utilized in the recruitment and selection of highly sensitive persons?	<p>Aron, E. 2016. The Highly Sensitive Person</p> <p>Models of recruitment and selection and their perception</p> <p>Jaeger, B. 2004. Making Work Work for the Highly Sensitive Person</p> <p>Principles of cognitive diversity</p> <p>Theory of needs as presented by Aldefer and its relation to highly sensitive job experiences</p>	Quantitative survey, Analysed with the use of descriptive tools on the basis of the cross-sectional method as per statistical results	4.2
IQ 2: What methods should not be used in the recruitment and selection of highly sensitive persons?	<p>Aron, E. 2016. The Highly Sensitive Person</p> <p>Models of recruitment and selection and their perception</p> <p>Jaeger, B. 2004. Making Work Work for the Highly Sensitive Person</p> <p>Principles of cognitive diversity</p>	Quantitative survey, Analysed with the use of descriptive tools on the basis of the cross-sectional method as per statistical results	4.2

	Theory of needs as presented by Aldefer and its relation to highly sensitive job experiences		
IQ 3: What aspects of the positions and companies encourage highly sensitive persons to apply in the recruitment and selection process?	<p>Aron, E. 2016. The Highly Sensitive Person</p> <p>Models of recruitment and selection and their perception</p> <p>Jaeger, B. 2004. Making Work Work for the Highly Sensitive Person</p> <p>Principles of cognitive diversity</p> <p>Theory of needs as presented by Aldefer and its relation to highly sensitive job experiences</p>	Quantitative survey, Analysed with the use of descriptive tools on the basis of the cross-sectional method as per statistical results	4.3
IQ 4: What aspects of the positions and companies discourage highly sensitive persons from applying?	<p>Aron, E. 2016. The Highly Sensitive Person</p> <p>Models of recruitment and selection and their perception</p> <p>Jaeger, B. 2004. Making Work Work for the Highly Sensitive Person</p> <p>Principles of cognitive diversity</p> <p>Theory of needs as presented by Aldefer and its relation to highly sensitive job experiences</p>	Quantitative survey, Analysed with the use of descriptive tools on the basis of the cross-sectional method as per statistical results	4.3
IQ 5: What added value do highly sensitive persons see themselves bringing to a position and a company?	<p>Aron, E 2016. The Highly Sensitive Person: Determining qualities of highly sensitive persons</p>	Qualitative open-ended survey questions, analysed with interpretative verbal content methods	4.4
IQ 6. What recommendations can be made to recruiters/HR regarding the recruitment of highly sensitive persons?	<p>Aron, E 2016. The Highly Sensitive Person: Determining qualities of highly sensitive persons</p>	Qualitative open-ended survey questions, analysed with interpretative verbal content methods	4.5

1.3 Scope of research

As a bachelor's human resources management thesis, the demarcation of this thesis begun by choosing a theme within the field of human resources that would, in relation to the group being studied, produce innovative and interesting ideas and results.

The three main elements of demarcation are the population of research, the determination of a real-life phenomenon as well as the selected process related to the field of human resource management.

The population to be studied was demarcated on the basis of personal and professional interest, the population in question being highly sensitive persons with experience in applying to jobs. As it stands, demarcating the population to this group makes the topic highly focused on the very group in question. As per Aron (1996, xvi), highly sensitive persons take up around 15-20% of the world's population, but the delimitation of the group goes further to include only those with some sort of experience in applying for jobs, making the percentage considered slightly less.

The real-life phenomenon studied in this thesis is the employability experience from the perspective of highly sensitive persons as well as the considering of cognitive diversity in accordance to thereof.

Lastly, from the processes of human resources, recruitment and selection was chosen. Recruitment will be considered both from an internal and external recruitment perspective. Selection, the selection of a suitable candidate, is taken into consideration in the latter steps of the recruitment process, namely interviewing and possible bias in selection processes.

1.4 Defining key concepts

The key concepts of this thesis are demarcated and defined based on the relevance to the research question and its investigative questions. The key concepts can be defined as:

Sensory processing sensitivity: "A temperament/personality trait characterized by sensitivity to both internal and external stimuli, including social and emotional cues" (Jagiellowicz & Xu & Aron & Aron Cao & Feng & Weng 2010, 1).

Highly sensitive person: A highly sensitive person can be described as an individual that absorbs, feels and reacts to as well as interprets physical, mental and emotional information, even if subtle, at a heightened depth. This heightened sensitivity often also drives

increased conscientiousness but can also result in a state of being easily overstimulated. It has been determined on the basis of research that roughly 15-20% of the population are highly sensitive. (Aron 1996, xvi-xxii.)

Overstimulation: Overstimulation can be described as the feeling of overload that results, specifically for highly sensitive people, as a result of their innate nature to continually notice and process even minor sensory input at a heightened level. This can thus be defined as a core stressor for highly sensitive people. As highly sensitive people are wired to notice the subtlest of details, it is also normal for a highly sensitive person to wear out faster. Noticing subtle details, however, also contributes to high attentiveness (if not over aroused) of highly sensitive persons. (Aron xviii-xix.)

Recruitment and selection: Bach (2005, 117) describes the process of recruitment as being the process of attracting persons for a specific position who have the potential to make an organizational contribution. Selection, then, is a continuation of recruitment in being a process where the organizational 'fit' between an individual, the organization and the job description is determined (Bach 2005, 115-116).

Social responsibility in recruitment: Recruitment and social responsibility will be considered especially from the point of view of diversity. It can be defined as "ensuring each applicant, irrespective of their background, has the chance to demonstrate exactly what they would bring to a role by making certain each phase of recruitment is inclusive" (My Kinda Future 2016, 3). This includes elements of cognitive diversity.

Cognitive diversity: Diversity is generally perceived through the lens of physical diversity, but cognitive diversity goes further to say that having a diverse cognitive framework within an organization further fosters organizational success (D'Souza 7 October 2020).

These key concepts will largely determine the content of the thesis research and present the building blocks of determining value for stakeholders.

2 Highly sensitive persons and cognitive diversity at work

This chapter discusses the theoretical elements of this thesis and the models and theories that support the research. The main themes of this research, namely including cognitive diversity, recruitment and selection practices, motivational consideration, as well as, of course, the highly sensitive person, are discussed collaboratively.

2.1 Defining diversity

This subchapter discusses diversity and its elements which are considered to be of importance to this research. Diversity and its importance at work, cognitive diversity as well as social responsibility in relation to diversity will be discussed. Moreover, this chapter takes a stance on possible stigmatization and its effects on diversity.

2.1.1 Diversity at work

Diversity amongst employees has risen to be an important topic of discussion on the modern corporate social responsibility agenda. Diversity builds on equal opportunity and non-discriminatory practices. (Visser & Matten & Pohl & Tolhurst 2010, 139-140.) Moreover, based on a study conducted by Harjoto, Laksmana and Lee (2014, 657) on Board Diversity and Corporate Social Responsibility, it is argued that diversity within organizational boards could be a major factor in increasing the ability to manage needs and interests of various stakeholders. However, without the propensity to see diversity as an element to further progress organizational value, the increased ability to manage and interest a varied set of stakeholders may be completely depleted.

Diversity promotes the exchange of opinions, and thus brings together knowledge to create better solutions on an organizational level. Diversity and inclusivity have become essential for recruiting and retaining top talent. The expansion of an organization's talent pool on a global level as well as innovation make diversity a competitive advantage for organizations. If an organization's efforts in diversity are noticed, this also positively impacts the employer brand of the organization. (Potochny 2020, Tencer 2011, Vaze 2020.)

2.1.2 Cognitive diversity

Cognitive diversity is a critical branch of diversity and arguably the most relevant in terms of the presented research. Cognitive diversity is encouraged through a variety of learned perspectives, namely, the ways which a person learns to perceive and interpret the world (Post & De Lia & DiTomaso & Tirpak & Borwankar 2009, 14-17).

Cognitive diversity may not be as visually perceived as diversity in its usual interpretation, but it nonetheless presents its advantages in an organization. In a Harvard Business Review research, it was discovered that levels of higher cognitive diversity resulted in better performance. Unfortunately, in the field of human resources, it is often mentioned that colleagues tend to gravitate towards a team that thinks in a similar way to themselves. This, in psychology's terms, is referred to as functional bias. If functional bias is already used in recruitment in selection, this evidently results in the creation of like-minded organizational teams. This then stifles the ability to innovate or deal with and resolve complex situations. (Reynolds & Lewis 2017.)

2.1.3 Stigmatization, diversity and social responsibility

The personality of a highly sensitive person can easily be stigmatized as timid, weak or unsociable (Aron 1996, 5). In these cases, the intuitiveness, conscientiousness and other valuable traits a highly sensitive person might bring to a team's cognitive diversity and ability to innovate are completely dismissed (Aron 1996, 236).

Unfortunately, individuals with personality-based stigmas can be viewed as being potentially disruptive to an organization. For example, individuals with low levels of sociability (a trait seen in highly sensitive persons) or individuals that are seen as threatening to others welfare, for example individuals with low levels of emotional stability (also can be considered as highly sensitive people, considering overstimulation and stress), are targets of treatment and accessibility discrimination in organizations. Furthermore, as emotional stability is a major impacting dimension of personality, labelled as being emotionally unstable, in a direct or indirect manner, can be extremely hurtful to someone wishing to progress in his or her career. (Aron 1996, 94-98; Dipboye & Colella 2012, 262.)

Carl Jung famously studied the collective unconscious of humans by analysing and interpreting the central symbols and themes that kept repeatedly appearing in people's minds over the course of the study. He then divided the collective results into 'archetypes', which can also be referred to as hard-wired human instincts that largely power our speech, thought and behaviour. One of the archetypes is identified as the 'king' and one other as the 'warrior.' While both archetypes have positive characteristics, as any king or warrior might have, being too much of one or the other creates an organizational imbalance. Ideally, a leader would exist and act as a balance of all four of the archetypes, which in addition to the 'king' and 'warrior' are deemed as the 'magician' and 'lover.' It is also to be taken into account that the archetype of the warrior has mostly been seen in its shadow forms, recognized as the 'sadist' and the 'masochist.' The king archetype, although seen as the ideal archetype considering all four, can also be associated with a possible power complex. (Dobson 2009, 157-159; Moore & Gillette 1990, 63-95; Tallman 2003, 19-27.)

Evidently, if the shadow sides of the archetypes are combined, an emotionally incompetent leader is born.

From the interpretation as possessed by a king-warrior archetype in their shadow forms, who are often seen as organizational leaders, highly sensitive people can be stigmatized as burdensome in the sense that they have a weakness in believing in the reality of the soul. This, in its essence, refers to the empathetic characteristics which highly sensitive people possess. Furthermore, the warrior-king is fearful of anything that could possibly weaken their physical power and courage, which could easily be the empathy at the base of emotional intelligence, which most highly sensitive people possess and navigate quite successfully. Research also goes to show that 'shy' persons are often underpaid and tend to end up working under their level of competence. These very mentioned factors may result in discrimination within recruitment processes. (Aron 1996, 116-126; Ioannidou & Konstantikaki 2008, 119; Tallman 2003, 22-23.)

In terms of personnel acquisition, stigmatization can be extremely hurtful to the applicant and the employer themselves, which can hypothetically increasingly be the case if the person in the management position is of the king-warrior archetype. The mentioned scenarios put the organization at risk of developing processes that oppose the very definition of diversity, and thus, social responsibility as it stands from a human and people perspective. The benefits of a diversified organization are numerous. Diversity facilitates innovation, productivity, creativity, understanding towards a larger clientele, thought diversity and a larger pool of experiences and ideas (Saxena 2014, 83). Highly sensitive people as employees are typically loyal, detail-oriented, visionary, intuitive, conscientious, thoughtful of stakeholder's needs and a positive influence on workplace environment (Aron 1996, 236). It is hereby a loss to stigmatize highly sensitive persons and additionally a disservice to elements of corporate social responsibility. Elements of possible stigmatization, namely in interviews, will be discussed in chapter 2.3.1.

2.2 The highly sensitive person

This subchapter goes on to discuss another fundamental aspect of this research already briefly mentioned in the previous chapter, the highly sensitive person. Specifically, the characteristics of a highly sensitive person and how the highly sensitive person experiences motivation at work.

2.2.1 Characteristics of a highly sensitive person

The fundamental behaviours of a highly sensitive person can be explained using the acronym DOES, presented by Elaine Aron (1996, xvii-xxii):

- D: depth of processing
- O: overstimulation
- E: emotional reactivity
- S: sensing the subtle

Depth of processing can be explained as the tendency to process information stimulus more deeply. Highly sensitive people take a longer period of time to process the meaning of things and to connect the subject thereof to other, perhaps bigger ideas that have come as a result of life experiences. This, in result, often leads to increasingly conscientious decision making abilities. The traits associated with conscientiousness are valuable attributes in the workplace, and the ability to reflect and connect ideas to a wider sphere of things leaves room for innovation. It is important, however, that the position of a highly sensitive person is fulfilling, even to the extent that they are able to create a “psychic income.” Making a “psychic income” would indeed be an ideal situation for a highly sensitive person, where a highly sensitive person can do something he or she truly appreciates, or something where the cause and effect of their work is clearly visible. Depth of processing may indeed be dangerous for highly sensitive persons in jobs where they are not satisfied, because the dissatisfaction is magnified. However, if a highly sensitive person can follow their calling, the depth of thinking fosters new ideas and innovation. (Aron 1996, 17-22; Jaeger 2004, 27-29.)

Overstimulation is directly linked to the depth of processing. As stimulus is received at a higher level in comparison to average, a highly sensitive person can easily become overwhelmed by their surrounding environment. Barrie Jaeger (2004, 85) refers to the cause of becoming overstimulated to be being “on” for extensive periods of time, at least as far as the definition of extensive goes for a highly sensitive person. This does also mean that highly sensitive persons are highly attentive when they are engaged in a situation. Especially positions that require a lot of “face time” may be exhausting, as the highly sensitive person absorbs the discussion, tone of voice, atmosphere of the discussion and perhaps facial expressions at a high level. This type of “face time” is also the reason why interviews may be especially challenging for highly sensitive people, in addition to the new environment the highly sensitive person will inevitably be surrounded with. (Aron 1996, 17-22; Jaeger 2004, 85-86.)

In terms of emotional reactivity as a defining trait, data shows that highly sensitive people react to negative and positive experiences more. It is also proven that highly sensitive people with a good childhood generally have an initial positive reaction to situations, and in general a more positive outlook on life. Perhaps because of the intensity of their relationship to their emotions, highly sensitive people also more empathetic, feeling, to an

extent, another's feelings. (Aron 1996, 19-20.) Empathy can simply be defined as emotional understanding, which in turn often translates to emotional intelligence (Ioannidou & Konstantikaki 2008, 119.) The concept of emotional intelligence is thought to be a useful tool when evaluating employees during critical points in their careers, including selection, for example. Moreover, Watkin (2002, 91) suggests that the "use of EI for recruitment decisions leads to 90-percentile success rates." The conscientiousness of highly sensitive people also improves their emotional understanding. Goleman (1998, 106) describes that those individuals with the competence of conscientiousness have distinguishable ability to keep promises and stick to commitments, to be careful and organized in the work which they do as well as to hold themselves accountable in terms of meeting their objectives.

Sensing the subtle, the last defining trait of highly sensitive persons, contributes to the intuitive power of the highly sensitive individual. In a social sense especially, sensing the subtle can be harnessed as a power to formulate responses in discussions on the basis of nonverbal cues, for example. (Aron 1996, xxii.)

2.2.2 The ERG motivation profile of an HSP

The motivations of highly sensitive people in terms of work can be compared to the ERG theory of motivation. Alderfer's ERG model stems from Maslow's famously known hierarchy of needs, condensing the five levels of Maslow's model into three levels of human needs, which are existence, relatedness and growth, presented in relation Jaeger's three levels of work for highly sensitive persons in figure 1. Existence needs are the most basic human needs to sustain survival. Relatedness needs connect social needs of feeling loved, safe (Dinibutun 2012.) Growth, the pinnacle of motivation, includes the desire for self-improvement and personal growth; self-actualization (Arnolds & Boshoff 2002, 698).

Although most probably everyone strives to achieve levels of growth in their career path, for highly sensitive people this is arguably increasingly important to take into consideration. Jaeger (2004, 35-224) explains the three levels of work for the highly sensitive person to be drudgery, craft and calling. These can directly be related to the three levels of existence as portrayed by Alderfer. Considering drudgery in terms of its alignment with existence, it may fulfil the 'basic' needs of a salary and a place to work, but in the case of the highly sensitive person, "being just a job is not the same thing for you as it is for your non-HSP co-workers" (Jaeger 2004, 34). This, for the highly sensitive person, is important to take into consideration already in the job application phase. Of course, in certain phases of our lives, we must undertake jobs that are indeed "just a job." However, the weight of applying for such jobs should be carefully considered by the highly sensitive person. In fact, in worst case scenarios, drudgery jobs can even contribute to burnout or depression

for the highly sensitive person, which is of course a result desired by no one. However, it is indeed impossible to know the entirety of a company's culture on the basis of two job interviews, much less one. Perhaps here it is also helpful to note that the highly sensitive person needs a lot of variety in their career, a conceivably notable fact to consider when applying for jobs. (Jaeger 2004, 34-61.)

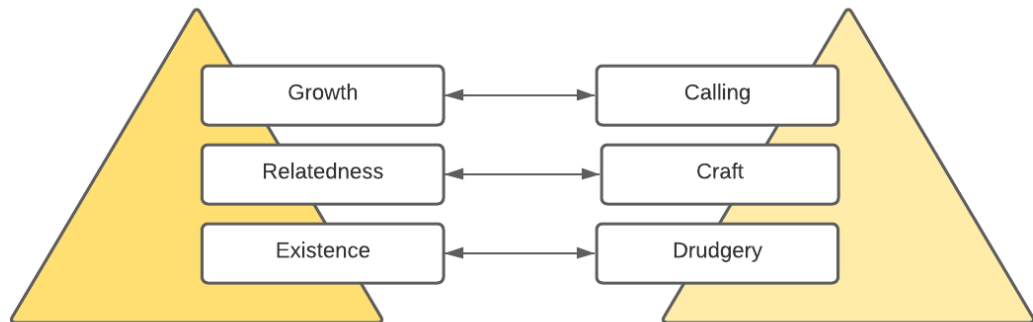


Figure 1. Alderfer's ERG theory of needs and its relation to Jaeger's three levels of jobs for highly sensitive persons (Dinibutun 2012; Jaeger 2004, 34-224.)

Relatedness, then, can be compared to another level of Jaeger's levels of work, craft. It can be considered that most people in modern-day societies have a craft job. It is a comfortable job where one can experience relatedness to society, but the job most likely only provides a moderate level of meaning for the employee. (Jaeger 2004, 96-101.) As Aron says, if a highly sensitive person is never forced to be practical, they may lose touch with reality and the world (Aron 1996, 119). Thus, it might be considered important for highly sensitive persons to experience a craft job. Jaeger (2004, 101) continues that craft is mirrored in the work ethics that modern societies are expected to pursue. From a relatedness perspective, considering relatedness as the ability to reciprocate, craft is a very 'relatable' place to be on a societal level (Pam 2013).

However, growth or calling, is ultimately where highly sensitive people feel the least stimulated and are at their most efficient. Calling and growth should be the ultimate striving point in searching for positions, that is. Being in a calling job makes a highly sensitive person feel like "this is me" (Jaeger 2004, 206). Aron (1996, 118) describes calling as an individuation process. Individuation can be described as the ability to listen to your inner voice despite internal or external noise. As highly sensitive persons are highly intuitive, it might seem like this is an easy process to follow. However, the overwhelming amount of intuition can make possibilities seem endless. Using individuation, or the driving element of it, intuition, in making decisions when applying to positions can ultimately be connected to a highly sensitive person finding their calling in life. (Aron 2004, 118-120.)

2.3 Defining recruitment and selection practices

This chapter discusses processes of recruitment and selection, and how highly sensitive persons might experience components of this process, such as interviews. Possible bias in recruitment and selection processes will also be discussed.

2.3.1 Recruitment and selection processes

Recruitment can be defined as the process of attracting individuals for a position who meet specifications pre-defined by the organization. Selection, then, weighs differences between individual candidates to determine which applicant meets the specifications the best. The purpose of the process of recruitment and selection is to match one person to the work which they will be doing. A key element, which also constitutes for the second stage within the process of recruitment and selection (see figure 2), is the defining of competencies. The term 'competencies' encloses elements of knowledge, past experience, personal attributes and values in relation to work. (Bach 2005, 115-117; Roberts 1997, 3-6; Taylor & Francis Group 2009, 1-5.)

Interviewing, presented as the sixth step of the [external] selection and recruitment process (see figure 2), is the most used methodology for selection of an employee. Interviews are completed based on either unstructured or structured framework. Research goes to show that unstructured interviews are as much as 50% less effective in comparison to structured interviews. (Roberts 1997, 11.) The different methodologies of interviews and their success in relation to highly sensitive persons will be further discussed in subchapter 2.3.1. Furthermore, the empirical research portion inquires highly sensitive people to evaluate their personal experience in interviews of various sorts. On the basis of the empirical component, extremely interesting results were discovered on the perception of interview processes from the perspective of a highly sensitive person. This will be discussed in chapter 4.2.

The process of recruitment can be fulfilled both internally and externally. According to research, internal recruitment is most commonly done when seeking for candidates in positions higher in the organizational hierarchy. A key component resulting in the mentioned phenomenon is that recruiting internally provides security in that the candidate is a suitable organizational fit. Internal candidates are also increasingly aware of processes within the organization and are thus trusted more to excel in the internal position which they are selected for. One key benefit of external recruitment, however, is the fostering of new ideas and innovation into the organization. (DeVaro 2020.) Figure 2 presents the key components of external recruitment, where all stages of the process must be considered. The figure further highlights components of internal recruitment, where the step of identifying

the job market can be eliminated, as the job market is limited to the current internal workforce. Additionally, the attraction of applicants requires significantly less work, as the employees are already familiar with the organization and desire to be retained in a position within the organization. However, according to Jed DeVaro (2020), internal job openings must still be attractive even to the internal applicant, as internal promotions act as a major motivator for employees on the basis of talent development.

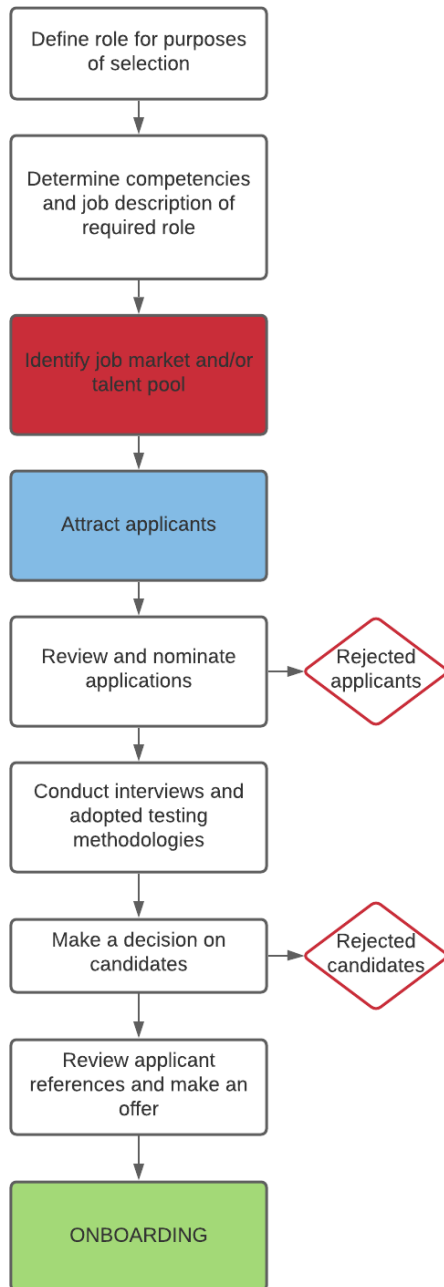


Figure 2. The process flow of external recruitment, based on Gareth Robert's (1997, 5) model. In internal recruitment processes, certain steps (red) can be eliminated, and others

(blue) require significantly less work. However, the position must still remain attractive to internal applicants.

The foundations of a successful recruitment and selection process are largely dependent on, firstly, knowing the talent pool you are wishing to attract, and where that talent pool can be reached. Moreover, having the skills to concretely specify the skills, interpersonal capabilities, and attitudes in order to perform the job adequately. We will discover in chapter 4.3 the importance of detailing job duties adequately in job advertisements, specifically when it comes to highly sensitive persons. Lastly, successful recruitment and selection is a result of providing sufficient development opportunities, rewards, compensation as well as challenges to motivate the specified talent pool of applicants. (Compton & Morrisson & Nankervis 2009, 1-5.)

2.3.2 HSP in the recruitment and selection process and possible bias

Barrie Jaeger (2004, 13-14) reflects in his research of the highly sensitive person at work that the highly sensitive person experiences occurrences with greater intensity than others. Internal or external job possibilities thus are often brought forth with intensity, which increases the difficulty to remain rational in the approach to situations that could possibly foster career success. Aron (1996, 133) goes on to say that if a highly sensitive person is not 'pushy' enough in situations where they desire to advance in an organization, they may easily be deemed as weak or even uninterested. It could also be considered that when a highly sensitive person does decide to apply for a position, the decision to apply is made with commitment and consideration. This presumption can be done on the basis of the fact that highly sensitive people often apply for so called 'no brainer' positions to spare themselves from a job hunt that truly excites them and their calling (Jaeger 2004, 32). So, when they do apply for increasingly advanced careers, it can be said with almost full certainty that this decision was on the basis of careful consideration and reflection.

The attraction of applicants is evidently an important step in recruitment and selection. A key element of attraction is often the company values, notably so for highly sensitive persons. Highly sensitive people can be defined as being 'value-driven', and these values often stand as the cornerstones for the productivity and energy of a highly sensitive person (Jaeger 2004, 130). Allen, Otondo and Mahto (2007, 1707) expand on recruitment and attraction, demonstrating with their findings the importance of a 'pre-existing image', which could also be referred to as the employer brand, in simpler terms. Creating a strong employer brand, in turn, is influenced by leading with organizational values (Forbes Human Resources Council 2020).

Understanding the selection process is crucial to making the process itself more efficient and enjoyable for the recruiter as well as the job applicant (Rozario S.D., Venkatraman S., Abbas, A. 2019, 2). Ployhart and Harold (2004, 85) in their development of the applicant attribution-reaction theory, also referred to as AART, supposed that there are a set of test perceptions that then influence overall test performance. Figure 3 highlights the test perceptions model as developed by Ployhart and Harold (2004, 85). Chapter 2.3.1. speaks of stigmatization and its impact on the recruitment and selection process. Similarly, the model of Ployhart and Harold takes into consideration the stereotype threat in test perceptions relative to the applicant. The stereotype threat is especially relevant to the research presented in this thesis, as the very definition of stereotype threat is the fear of feeling or being at risk of aligning with stereotypes of one's own social group (Spencer & Logel & Davies 2016, 417).

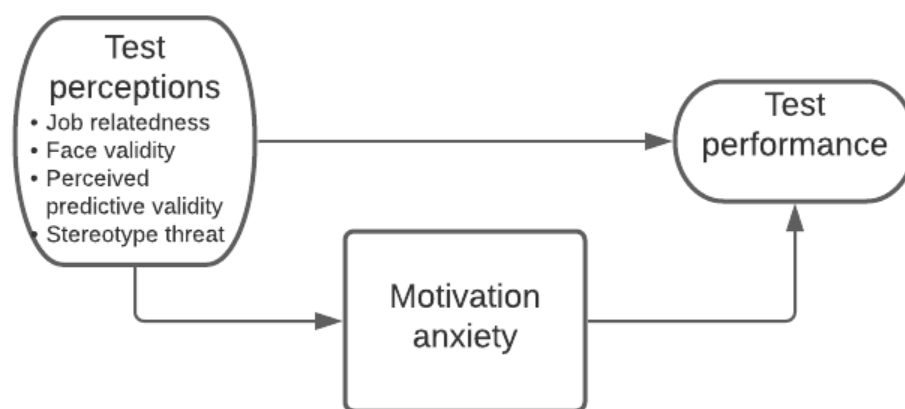


Figure 3. Test perceptions model as developed by Ployhart and Harold (2004,85).

Although during the recruitment and selection procedure a person's full persona may not be visible, highly sensitive people who are not confident in their abilities may have the desire to hide in fears of being stigmatized, or frankly, stereotyped (Jaeger 2004, 128). This, as seen in the diagram, may lead to motivation anxiety and further weaken the highly sensitive applicants test performance (Ployhart & Harold 2004, 85).

Understanding these recruitment practices and their flow, as well as what aspects influence the applicant the most enable us to determine what steps of the recruitment and selection process are especially important to take into consideration in terms of the highly sensitive candidate. As we will see, there is immense value in the traits of the highly sensitive person within an organization, taking a holistic consideration beyond stigmatization or stereotyping.

2.4 A highly sensitive person in a recruitment interview: in theory

Before entering an interview, it is important to note that the beliefs, values, ambiance and stories of a company have a significant impact on how a highly sensitive person may be motivated in approaching a company. Of course, these elements may be difficult to estimate in the job ad review phase and may only be highlighted when the individual first visits the company or office they are going to work at, which is often for the first time at the interview. The previously mentioned aspect of too much “face time” is also an added stressor to a highly sensitive person. (Jaeger 2004, 85-86.)

Due to factors of overstimulation especially in interview situations, highly sensitive persons may feel especially overwhelmed and perhaps anxious. Interviews require for the interviewee to be “on”, which is emotional labour for highly sensitive people. The interviewee is also expected to act professional and “grown-up”, which can be distressing (Jaeger 2004, 85.) This is a major disadvantage for highly sensitive people in especially interview settings, because as Dipboye and Colella (2012, 259) depict, if an individual manifests anxiety during his or her interview, it can be often determined from the perspective of the interviewer that the interviewee lacks emotional stability, has low self-esteem and job-related competences and that the person is prone to depression.

Stigmatization can be a major driver of discrimination, where certain people or groups are treated differently as a result of their stigmatized status (Frost 2011, 825). With the pre-existing prejudices, it may be hard to see the applicants or employee’s true potential. For highly sensitive people, the highly beneficial characteristics that they possess, such as their conscientiousness and creativity can in stigmatized minds be completely eluded already during the interview stage of job-seeking (Jaeger 2004, 28). This limits the ability to display and prove competencies already before the start of a highly persons career, limiting opportunity for the organization and the applicant themselves.

2.5 What the highly sensitive person brings to the workplace

Highly sensitive persons are detail-oriented, visionary, thoughtful and conscientious employees. They are often also perceptive about their work environment and are often a positive force on the social atmosphere of the workplace. (Aron 1996, 236.) As a result of the perception highly sensitive people possess towards other’s feelings and suffering, many highly sensitive people choose service jobs (Aron 1996, 126).

In the business world, however, the qualities of the highly sensitive person often go undervalued or even dismissed. The value that highly sensitive people bring to the business world, specifically to customer service and the atmosphere of an organization is immense.

Highly sensitive persons are very thoughtful to the needs of consumers and in serving customers with attentiveness to quality control. Furthermore, they are creative visionaries leading with harmony and morale, which reflects in the social atmosphere of an organization. A highly sensitive person may be discouraged by the world of business as achievement can be defined with expansion and pioneering. (Aron 1996, 128.) In today's society, speediness has become a desired state, but very few consider the correlation between growth and moving slow. Redefining slow as thoughtful, smooth and strategic may just produce better results, especially if there are highly sensitive people in the team. (Bansal 2021.)

This topic, from the perspective of highly sensitive people, will be discussed more in subchapter 4.4 as it was furthermore explored in the empirical research component.

3 Research methods

This chapter discusses the methods that were implemented in completing the research to provide an understanding to the basis of why the research was completed in the way in which it was. The chapter comprehensively discusses research design, the design of the data collection survey, the defining of the population and discretionary sample as well as the data analysis methods, and finally, reliability, validity, and relevance.

3.1 Research design

This research was conducted using a cross-sectional quantitative survey with some qualitative components. The quantitative component produced a descriptive analysis of the data collected. The questions focused on the behaviours, perceptions and feelings of highly sensitive people in relation to real-life recruitment and selection situations. In terms of the qualitative component, an interpretative verbal content analysis was completed. The analysis focused on the open-ended questions where the respondents described recruitment and selection processes in their own words. Figure 4 illustrates the research approach.

Quantitative cross-sectional descriptive research methodology was used on the basis of its characteristics, which were found to be supportive of the type of research in question. Firstly, descriptive analyses study their subjects in a naturalistic environment, instead of lab-based settings. Additionally, especially behavioural observation was useful with this research methodology, as there is no experimental manipulation. Moreover, considering that the research presented is fairly new, descriptive research provides opportunity to answer the question 'what', 'how', 'where' and 'when', while leaving room for further study in the form of further elaborating on the 'why' of the subject. (McCombes 2019a; Sloman 2010, 20.) The cross-sectional type of research also allows for the description of characteristics that may exist in a specific community at a single point in time, which in our case was the highly sensitive person (Cherry 2019).

The interpretative verbal content analysis method was used for the interpretation of the open-ended questions on the basis of reasoning that it is a useful method in defining and revealing patterns in communication behaviour and content as well as quantifying relationships in ideas. This will be especially useful in examining the way in which highly sensitive persons answer to open-ended questions regarding the investigative questions in focus. (EDUCBA 2021.)

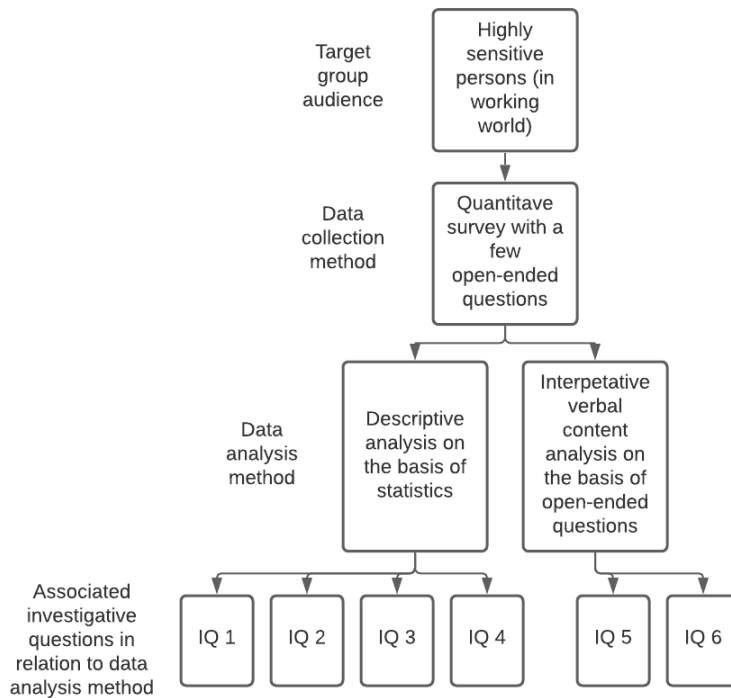


Figure 4. Implementation of research design. (Cherry 2019; EDUCBA 2021; McCombes 2019a; Sloman 2010, 20.)

The population of this survey will be defined alongside other crucial elements of data collection such as the survey structure, the types of options utilized in the survey, the approaching of the target group in an ethical sense and other practical processes in gathering data in the following chapter.

3.2 Population and discretionary sampling

The target population of this survey are highly sensitive people of all ages with some sort of work experience. Thus, one of the foundational questions in the survey inquired the respondent as to which phase of their working life they are currently in. It can be interpreted to some extent, that most respondents will be 18 years or older, simply on the basis that some job experience was required to answer the survey adequately.

The sample will be determined on the basis of a discretionary sample, meaning the response will be voluntary for the survey presented on various self-selected platforms. The sampling method in this research is considered to be purposive sampling. (McCombes 2019b.) In this, a highly specific group with shared characteristics, the highly sensitive persons, will be sampled to study the phenomenon which is the highly sensitive persons experience of recruitment and selection processes.

3.3 Designing the data collection survey

The data of this research was collected with the means of a self-designed survey, thus making the data collected primary data. The flow of the survey is in large part designed to capture the interest of the respondent, not necessarily following the life cycle of the recruitment and selection process, which could be considered as being a more logical approach. However, elements of the recruitment and selection process (i.e., interview processes, communication about selection) are grouped together.

A survey is like a conversation, although somewhat one-sided. It should also be considered, from the point of view of the respondent, that sensitive questions are asked last, so that the respondent feels connected to the subject before posing more 'intense' questions. (Epstein 2021.) Especially considering the nature of the respondents as highly sensitive persons, it is important to take into consideration the effort of trying to minimize elements of overstimulation. Thus, open-ended questions, presumably requiring the most effort and thought from the person, are placed last (excluding basic background questions, such as the gender of the respondent).

The survey is comprised of, in large part, quantitative questions. However, three questions in the survey are open-ended questions, which add a qualitative element to the survey. These qualitative questions are extremely important in taking into consideration the psychological element of the research, in looking at how the highly sensitive persons perceive the recruitment and selection processes using their own words.

The design of the data collection survey and taking into consideration the nature of the respondent made the development of the survey a lengthier process. For example, terminology used was crucial in capturing the genuine feeling of the respondent in relation to quite concrete aspects of recruitment and selection processes. It might be considered, for example for the question 'how comfortable are you with the following interview approaches?' that the question of comfort really triggers the (specific) emotion of the respondent as opposed to asking for example 'how do you feel about the following interview approaches?' This also may limit overwhelm when considering the inquiring about general feelings versus pointing at a specific feeling that the highly sensitive person is to consider when responding to the question.

Table 2. Investigative questions relation to survey questions. The survey questions can be found in their entirety in appendix 1, to further elaborate on the possible answers provided for each question.

Investigative question	Related survey measurement question (the numbering of questions reflects that of the survey)
Background questions	10. Are you... (gender)? 11. Where do you currently live? 12. Where are you in your career life?
IQ 1: What methods should be utilized in the recruitment and selection of HSPs? IQ 2. What methods should not be used in the recruitment and selection of HSPs?	1. How comfortable are you with the following interview approaches? 2. Would having preliminary information about an interview (i.e. possible questions) significantly improve your performance in the interview? 6. How important are the following aspects to you in terms of communication on the final recruitment decision? 7. Please explain in a few words how you feel if you are not communicated about the recruitment decisions at all?
IQ 3. What aspects of the positions and companies encourage HSPs to apply in the recruitment and selection process? IQ 4. What aspects of the positions and companies discourage HSPs from applying?	3. When you have applied for a position, what attracted you to it? Please indicate X for 1-3 of the factors most important to you. 4. Please indicate the importance of the following elements in a job posting 5. How appealing do you find the following job expressions in a job advertisement?
IQ 5. What added value do HSPs see themselves bringing to a position and a company?	9. Please explain in a few words what you feel you as a highly sensitive person bring to the workplace?
IQ 6. What recommendations can be made to recruiters/HR regarding the recruitment of HSPs?	8. Please give some suggestions that you would like to make to recruiters or managers based on your recruitment experiences, namely as a highly sensitive person?

The answers for the questions were largely presented in a matrix, so as to collect a large amount of data to analyse each question extensively. For example, question 1 presented various possible interview approaches to the respondent to which the respondent presented their level of comfort towards. Presenting questions largely in the form of matrices has multiple benefits, including taking up less space and a swifter response time due to pre-determined responses, an important element also in trying to avoid over-stimulation of the respondent (QuestionPro 2021). A few open-ended questions were then used to give the platform to the respondent to express their feelings using their own words.

3.4 Data collection

The data collection begun on the 1st of March 2021 and ended on the 29th of March 2021. The goal for the number of responses received was 200, which was unfortunately not

quite reached. The final number of respondents was 103. This will be discussed more extensively in chapter 3.7. The distribution of the survey is noted in figure 5. Here it is important to note that great importance was taken in ensuring that the respondents were in fact highly sensitive, in effort to reduce discrepancies and untruthfulness in the survey results.

The survey was also targeted at those highly sensitive persons taking a keen interest in the subject. This was done by putting the survey in highly sensitive groups on Facebook, or otherwise targeted at followers of pages for highly sensitive persons on Instagram. Here, the participants and followers of the groups have clearly recognized their trait and wanted a support system for it, which shows, to an extent, the interest of these individuals in the subject itself. This, I believe, had a great contribution to the truthfulness of the answers within the survey, as the persons answering are clearly in some ways committed to shedding light upon the subject. The last resort was to post publicly the survey on my personal profiles, where a link to the highly sensitive test guided respondents to reflect on whether they truly relate to being highly sensitive, after which (on the basis of whether the person found themselves relating to this), the person was guided to then complete the survey.

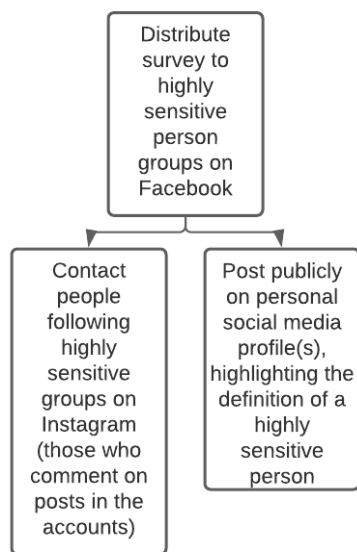


Figure 5. Distribution of survey

The channels used for survey distribution aside from the Facebook groups were Instagram, LinkedIn as well as WhatsApp groups.

In its totality, the survey reached 689 people, of which roughly 15 % were respondents, based on results in Webporol. Overstimulation could possibly be considered as a component of this result, naturally, where highly sensitive persons were overwhelmed by the thought required for processing and responding to the survey. Also, at the opening of the survey, there was a clear explanation of what a highly sensitive person was, so if one opened the survey but did not resonate with the description, they may have turned away from responding.

3.5 Data analysis

The quantitative data (questions 1-6 and 10-12) as gathered with the use of a Webporol survey was analysed through Excel in transferring the data to the spreadsheet. SPSS software could have been used, but as the number of respondents was as low as 103, the analysis of results on the basis of data transfer to Excel was fairly simple to accomplish. The qualitative data was analysed with an interpretative verbal analysis, where quotes (which were deemed non-revealing of the respondent) were used to support conclusions made. The 'Text Mining' element was also used from Webporol to filter out commonly used terminology from the qualitative questions. This helped to group together qualitative responses for interpretative verbal analysis.

Although the background information was the last component on the survey, as this portion requires the least effort to fill and can be completed quickly when the time-consuming component has been filled, these results will be analysed first in the results chapter. This is done to give the reader an understanding of the respondents before analysing the other components of the survey.

Although some of the questions in the survey were organized on the basis of chronological recruitment processes (i.e., application, interview...), some were strictly organized on the presumed interest of the respondent towards the questions themselves. For example, qualitative questions were organized towards the end of the survey because these might be considered as more stimulating, so instead of respondents being discouraged by these questions directly at the beginning of the survey, they were organized at the end.

When analysing the results, however, the chapters were organized by IQ, which somewhat followed the chronological order of the questions, as can be seen in table 2.

3.6 Ethical considerations

Some of the most important ethical considerations to take when designing a survey are that it is confidential and the examination of persuasion versus pressure used in survey

questions and in its distribution (Fisher 2020). In this survey, especially confidentiality was important, considering the personal relationship each of the respondents has with their high sensitivity. It was also important from a surveyor's perspective to make the respondent feel safe in responding to the survey. It can even be noted that the respondents were made aware of the anonymity of their survey responses before responding to the survey. This can further be seen on the post distributed to respondents in appendix 2.

It was also important to persuade the respondents to answer the survey, instead of making them feel pressured to do so. This was done by highlighting the importance of the survey for the highly sensitive community and the continued research on the subject. Moreover, questions were personalized in a way by using terminology which took the feelings of the respondent into question. For example, saying 'how comfortable are you with this...' versus 'what do you think about this...', an element of a specific feeling is associated with the question.

To portray the transparency of the survey, it was important to provide a comprehensive introduction at the beginning of the survey, so that the respondent had a clear understanding of their benefit in answering it.

Lastly, the introduction of the survey also included personal contact information of the author, myself, so that if any questions did arise, those could be answered as well. It seemed that respondents were satisfied with the way in which they were approached and how the flow of the survey was designed, as I did not receive any e-mails in regard to questions about the survey itself.

3.7 Validity, reliability and relevance

The main notable risk to take into consideration was not getting enough survey results, as the group to be surveyed was extremely specific and responses outside of this group could have swayed the results to be represented incorrectly. To avoid this risk, survey distribution was done with a very specific approach. Limani (2021) indicates that one of the top ways of improving survey response rates is asking the right people. Thus, the distribution, as explained in chapter 3.3, was completed with the use of specific groups for highly sensitive persons, or otherwise highlighting the definition of a highly sensitive person, after which the survey was prompted. Although the number of survey respondents was lower than what originally was hoped for, the sample size, considering specificity of the survey group, was adequate to perform interesting and accurate results. When monitoring the results throughout the survey, it was also noted that the results did not sway much after about 75 respondents had responded to the survey.

Another present risk was approaching the respondents in a way that would seem non-invasive and would cause as little overwhelm as possible. For the mitigation of this risk, it was important to ensure some sort of relationship and an incentive for the respondent to answer the survey. Considering that I am a highly sensitive person myself, the respondents were able to trust the cause of the survey. Moreover, in distributing the survey, it is important to explain the purpose of the survey to receive an increased number of survey responses (Survicate 2021). Wherever the survey was distributed, it was thus also explained why the survey is of importance to society and to highly sensitive persons themselves. An example of this is presented in appendix 2.

The design of the survey took a stance on reliability largely by the design of the questions and the framework behind the survey distribution. Another risk of concern was that the survey respondents were not highly sensitive, which would ultimately skew the results the most. Here, it was most important to firstly deliberately provide a comprehensive explanation of what a highly sensitive person is at the beginning of the survey. The survey questions were also designed in a way where the highly sensitive person was taken into specific consideration, for example one may not consider their 'comfortability' towards an interview scenario normally, but this may be very relevant for highly sensitive persons.

Gearing the wording of the questions to suit highly sensitive people also made the responses relevant. Although it is a bold statement to make, I truly do also believe that unless one was truly interested in the subject, especially as a highly sensitive person, this person would have not taken the time to respond to the survey. As can be seen throughout the empirical results, the quotations provided by highly sensitive persons in the open-ended questions were also very relevant and fitting, proving the relevance factor.

Although it could be interpreted that selection bias took place because the survey was distributed to very specific channels, the survey was made available for quite a large audience. For example, some of the groups had tens of thousands of participants. The results also will show that most of the respondents were female, but as it is further explained in chapter 4.1, this does not drastically however impact the generalizability of the results.

4 Results

This chapter discusses the results which were discovered as a result of the completed research, both in qualitative and quantitative terms. Each subchapter is broken down on the basis of investigative questions, as well as discussing the meaning of the results which were determined on the basis of the foundational questions presented to the respondent.

4.1 Background data

The background data of the thesis was split into three components: gender, current place of residence and the status of the respondent in relation to where they currently are in their career lives. The survey had a total of 103 respondents, of which 87,4% were female, 11,6% were male, and 1% other or preferred not to disclose of this subject, as presented in table 3. Here, it can be noted that men usually score lower on the sensitivity spectrum (Aron 1996, xvi). From an interpretative perspective, most participants and/or followers of social media groups (i.e., HSP accounts on Instagram as well as Facebook groups) are largely female. In specific Facebook groups for highly sensitive people, for example, only very rarely would a posting be from a male. Elaine Aron (1996, 85) says that highly sensitive men, if their trait was not appreciated in childhood, have a lot of self-loathing. Considering societal stereotypes about men, the non-valuing of the trait in childhood could predictably be a quite common issue. Highly sensitive men, at least on the basis of comments on posts or in groups on social media platforms, are also less eager to share their feelings in regard to high sensitivity. Scientific research also supports the statement that women are more expressive about their emotions in comparison to men, so the phenomenon which appeared on the results of this survey is perfectly understandable (Barret & Robin & Pietromonaco & Eysell 1998, 565).

Concerning the generalizability of the results and the fact that males do score lower on the high sensitivity spectrum, the validity thereof is not expected to be vastly biased or strayed. The difference in percentage is however quite drastic, so there may be some bias in the female direction. If the respondents were increasingly male, the results could be a little more 'drastic', that is to say, men may perceive their high sensitivity in a perhaps a more prominent light, especially if the trait has not been valued in their years of development (Aron 1996, 85). Overall, the trait of high sensitivity is however perceived from the standpoint of the trait itself, so even if the respondents were largely female, there is no grand reason to believe that this fact has a determining impact on the results and the interpretation thereof.

Table 3. Gender demographic

Female	87,4%
Male	11,6%
Prefer not to disclose/other	1,0%

The survey attracted respondents from five continents, notably the most from North America and Europe, as figure 6 portrays. An element of this may be that the groups in which the survey was posted were perhaps targeted to North American audiences, as the language of the groups was always English. The survey was also shared on my personal social media platforms, where most of the contacts are either European or North American, of which some certainly associated as being highly sensitive. It could also be considered that most of the personal contacts that were perhaps reached were most likely women. Beyond that, the gender-place of current residence correlation is not exactly notable.

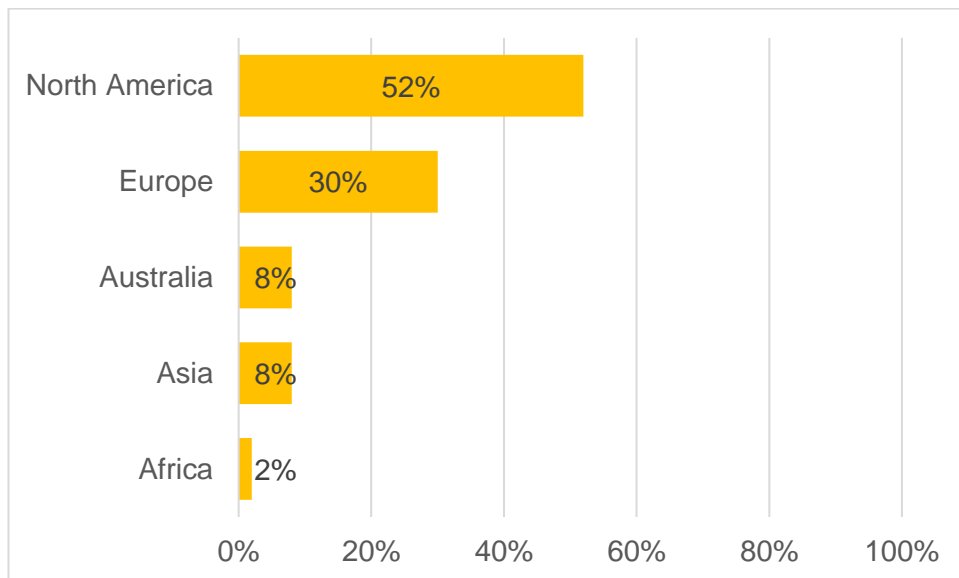


Figure 6. Place of current residence

Figure 7 presents the place of the respondents in their career lives. The percentages portray diversified results, making the drawn conclusions relevant to a wider demographic. However, most people (38%) were currently in the middle of their careers, which serves the research well, considering that these respondents have enough work experience to be reflecting of recruitment and selection practices from an applicant's perspective. It can also be interpreted that those groups with the most relevant situation in relation to working life were those who answered the most. For the purposes of study, it could also be considered that those in the very early stages of their career have the most 'prominent' experience when it comes to recruitment and selection processes from the applicant's perspective. However, this cannot be said for certain, but it is often the case that those in their mid-career, late career, or those who have retired from work life, have remained with the

same employer for a longer period. Those in their early careers, however, might also feel that their insight on recruitment and selection processes is not as much, so they have chosen not to respond to the survey as much as those later in their careers. There is much room for interpretation here, and of course these will remain as relatively unanswered questions. Those later in their careers might also have a better perspective in distinguishing good recruitment and selection practices from bad ones, which increased their motivation to participate in the survey.

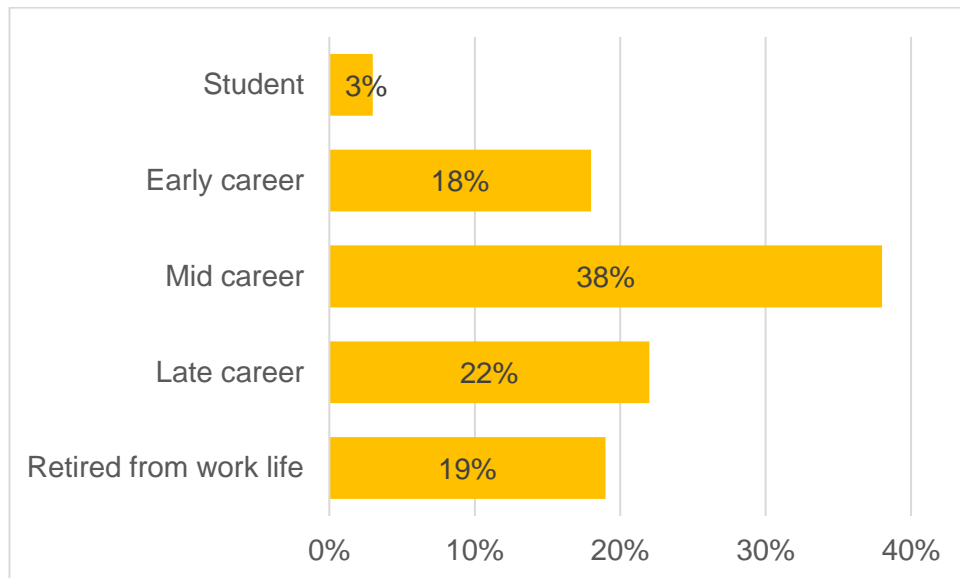


Figure 7. Current place in career life

4.2 Effective methods to be used in the recruitment and selection of highly sensitive persons

In analysing the most effective methods for interview processes in recruitment and selection, as experienced by highly sensitive people, it was clear that some methods were favoured above others. Biro (2013) highlights the importance of personalization in the recruitment process, reminding that one size does not fit all, and that dismissing personalization may ultimately drive away promising candidates.

The immediate conclusion of the results can be considered that the less stimulating the interview method, the better. A visual representation of this can be seen in figure 8. Thus, when asking highly sensitive persons which interview methods they were most comfortable with, an individual interview with one interviewer, a work sample interview and a traditional interview were the most favoured options. Especially the level of comfortability with group interviews or interviews with several interviewers seemed to overwhelm highly sensitive persons.

There are several characteristics of one-on-one interviews that present favourable characteristics in terms of the recruitment process, especially for the highly sensitive person. Bell (13 April 2021) writes that, for example, there is increased understanding, empathy, phatic communication, flexibility and improved listening when an interview is conducted on a one-on-one basis. Considering these elements and the defining traits of highly sensitive persons, the result of one interviewer as the most comfortable choice (3,9 out of 5) in relation to interview practices for highly sensitive persons is only logical. An individual interview from the interviewee perspective is also favoured as a comfortable option (3,6 out of 5). The result of the two least comfortable options is exactly opposing to the two most comfortable interview practices, which juxtaposes the extremity of feelings of comfortability on this spectrum. Figure 8 presents this data comprehensively.

Another intriguing element of the results is the favourability of work sample interviews (3,00 out of 5,00) in comparison to behavioural interviews (2,80 out of 5,00). Although the difference is not vastly different, if we consider the elemental nature of these two, behavioural interviews are much more stimulating. In fact, SHRM (2021) uses the adjectives 'probing' and 'pointed' when it comes to proposing behavioural interview questions. What is interesting about work sample interviews is that they have been studied not only to have greater validity, but to have a lesser negative influence in relation to minority groups (Callinan & Robertson 2000, 248). Whether the work sample is completed in the form of a simulation or on the basis of completed past work, the ability of highly sensitive people to concentrate deeply as well as their conscientiousness serve as useful tools in this methodology of testing (Aron 1996, 11).

Another notable aspect of these results is that the difference between a traditional interview at the office and a video interview is not very drastic. It is also curious to note that a traditional interview is preferred over a video interview, but this can be interpreted in that in a face-to-face setting, highly sensitive persons can better evaluate their environment than over a video interview, even though one may think that a highly sensitive person is more comfortable in terms of stimulants in a video interview.

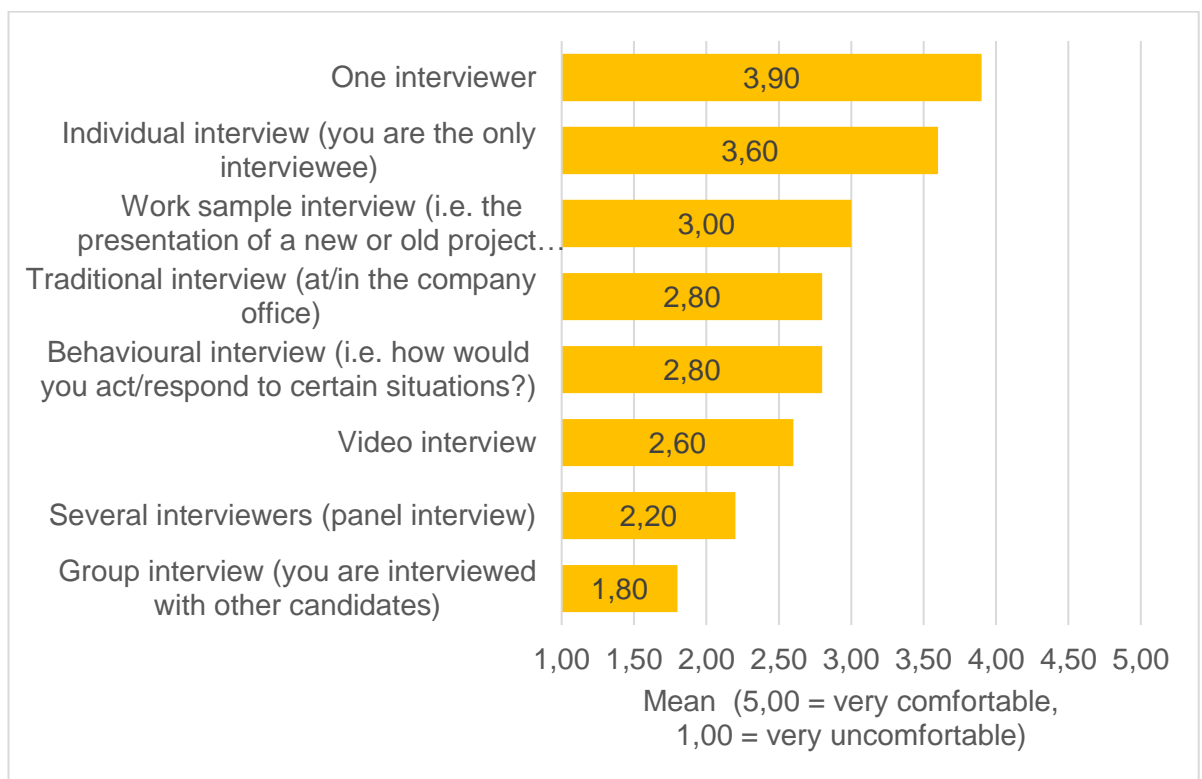


Figure 8. Level of comfortability of respondents in regard to interview methods, results presented on the basis of mean (average) values

Of course, the rate of comfortability for highly sensitive persons is to be compared with other cognitively diverse groups to understand which methods serve as the ultimate solution. However, what is important here is the consideration of desires when it comes to interview methods, so as to give room for the expression of talent without the limitation of it for bureaucratic reasons (Biro 2013).

The second question of the survey asking if having preliminary information about an interview (i.e., possible questions) would significantly improve the performance of highly sensitive people in an interview, in their opinion, produced results that were quite predictable. From a scale of 1 to 10, the average answer was a 9. According to Elaine Aron (1996, 124), highly sensitive persons can be 'worry-prone perfectionists', partially explaining why they feel that preparedness for an interview in terms of knowing possibly questions would aid them. It is important for recruiters to remember also that the purpose of interviews is to evaluate past performance, "not their presentation skills" (Adler 2015).

Figure 9 presents feelings in relation to the communication of recruitment decision, and their importance. As we will discover in chapter 4.5, highly sensitive people value a communicative recruitment and selection process. This is no different when it comes to communication about the recruitment decision, as each component of the recruitment decision

was considered to be at least important (referring to 3 on the scale) in being communicated to highly sensitive persons, seen in figure 9 below.

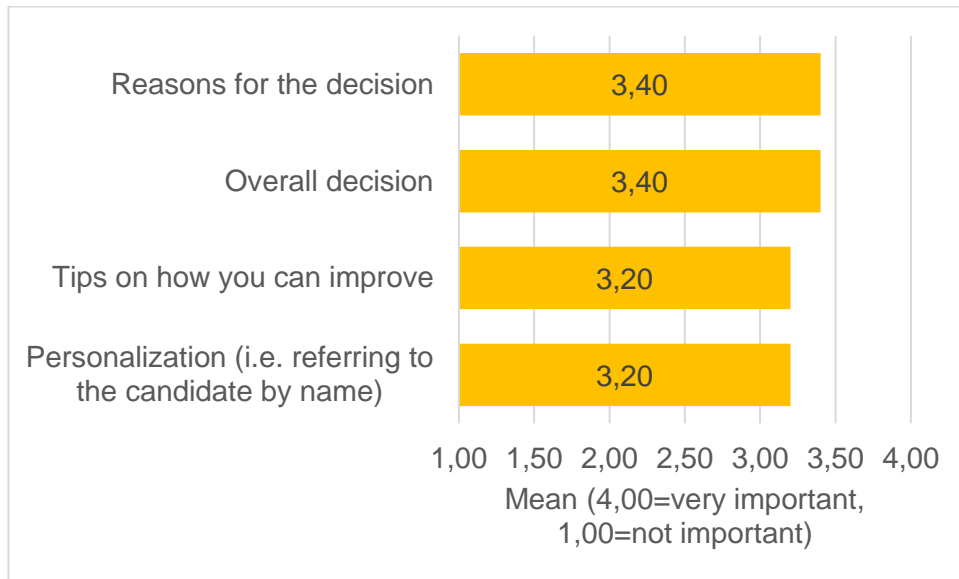


Figure 9. Elements of importance in regard to recruitment decisions

It is especially important for highly sensitive persons to know the reasons for the decision as well as what the overall decision is. Respondents communicated their feelings when not being communicated to at all following the recruitment decision as such:

- “I would feel the time and energy it took me to prepare is not being valued”
- “I get anxious”
- “I would feel disrespected, and wonder if that carries over into the culture”
- “It impacts my self-esteem because I feel like I am not worth the time”
- “I feel it is rude after I have taken time and energy considering said company”
- “I feel it to be rude, disrespectful and insensitive to me as an individual”
- “Anxious. I need to know if/when it’s time to move on.”
- “Frustrated that I don’t know why”
- “A denial is more upsetting than no response.”
- “Like I won’t be any more better off/prepared for the next job interview”

Here, the magnitude of the impact of not being communicated to can be clearly perceived. A non-communicative approach is extremely discouraging and even detrimental when considering motivation in the future of highly sensitive persons to apply to positions. In these instances, it can be easy for a highly sensitive person to apply to drudgery jobs, satisfying merely existence needs (refer to chapter 2.2.2.). The impact of non-communication in recruitment decisions, may in fact, when considering characteristics and overstimulation of highly sensitive persons, lead to mental discouragement, anxiety and self-esteem issues. Good communication processes may in fact be crucial to the success of highly sensitive persons as employees, as uncertainty is an underlying fact in overstimulation.

4.3 Discussing job advertisements and the motivation of highly sensitive persons to apply to positions

Highly sensitive people are motivated in applying to positions considering a range of factors. The basis of motivation was largely determined by a good salary and benefits, and some things suggest believing that this is because of some unconscious or semiconscious desire to be recognized for good work. As mentioned previously, shy persons tend to be paid less and also often work below their level of competence. Furthermore, highly sensitive persons tend to dislike aggressively promoting themselves. (Aron 1996, 133-236). Thereby, knowing that they will be paid and benefit adequately from their work in the application phase is evidently important to most highly sensitive persons (57,3%). The results in figure 9 present the percentage of responses considering three of the most important elements of attraction per respondent.

Next, a drawing element was a dream job or career (45,6% of respondents), proximity and the physical location of the workplace (43,7% of respondents) and flexibility of work (39,8% of respondents). Company culture (37,9% of respondents) was also considered of importance. An interesting point in the results is that there is a drastic difference in the percentages between elements of attraction and those which were not considered as much to be influential factors. That is to say, there was a clear distinction as to which elements were of matter to highly sensitive persons in the job applications phase on the basis of the results.

It could, to some extent, be concluded that elements contributing to less stimulation and overwhelm were considered to be increasingly important. For example, the proximity of the workplace as well as flexibility of work are factors which often decrease stimulation.



Figure 10. Elements of attraction for highly sensitive persons in applying to positions

Figure 10 presents elements specific to job postings which highly sensitive people consider to be of importance. Greko and Roger (2003, 1057) write that uncertainty can be considered as a very powerful stressor. If an employee, namely a highly sensitive one, is unsure about their responsibilities when applying, overstimulation may very well be a result of anxieties based on the unknown. In fact, the respondents considered the importance of descriptive job duties to be almost always very important (3,80 out of 4,00). Description of a suitable candidate, the more personal elements of potential success in a position, were considered also almost as equally important (3,40 out of 4,00).

If we consider the value-driven personalities of highly sensitive persons (Jaeger 2004, 103), this can be related to the results of importance in relation to company culture. It is interesting to note, however, that only 15,5% considered the diversity of the organization to be of great significance at the job application phase, which is inevitably related to company values. It can here be considered that company culture could holistically, though, umbrella diversity and ethics, which is why the respondents chose the broader concept to hold significance.

Training and development opportunities, not only in elements of attraction for applying to positions, but also when considering elements of job postings (if this is considered in comparison to other elements listed in figure 10), did not seem to be of extreme importance to highly sensitive persons.

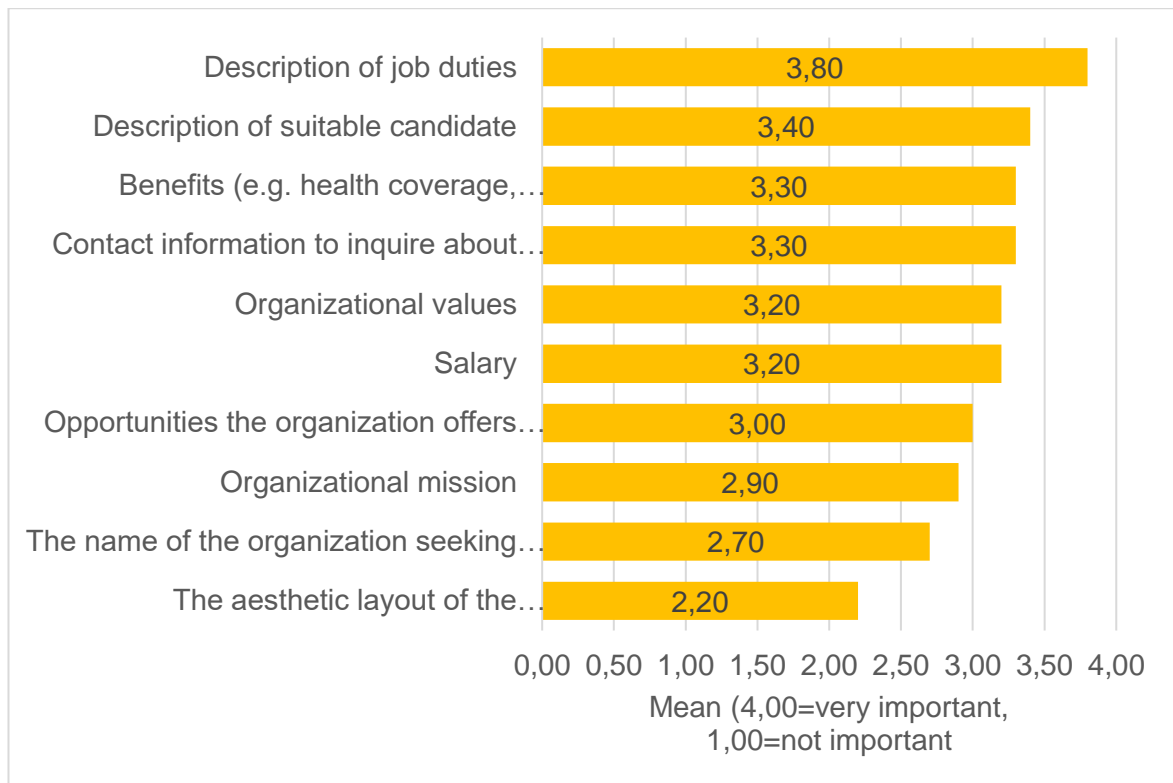


Figure 11. Elements of job postings important to highly sensitive persons

One of the most interesting results of the survey was the response to the question of appeal towards various phrases used in job advertisements. Especially the phrases “must be able to work under pressure” and “fast-paced environment” were unappealing to highly sensitive persons, as seen in figure 11. Aron (1996, 116) writes that the highly sensitive person does not function well under overstimulating working environments, stress or long hours of work. If the meaning of “fast-paced environment” or “must be able to work under pressure” translates to high performance, balancing many projects at once and collaboration, it is inevitably a not desired position for a highly sensitive person to be in (Greggs 2021).

Today’s society of work also assumes that fast work means smart work, when indeed this is not the case. In general, smart work is considered to be slower. (Bucur 2018.) Bansal (2021) further explains the term agility in relation to a fast-paced work environment does not mean ‘quick work’, but rather smart strategizing to make work effective. Thus, considering that highly sensitive persons do not view these phrases often used in jobs ads as necessarily appealing, may actually present a bigger question if these phrases are actually useful in representing an employer. Naturally, there are fields of work where work is inevitably fast paced. However, labelling a workplace as such may not actually be useful. Moreover, Glassdoor Team (2021) states that 26% of Americans say that they are ex-

tremely often stressed at work, a result studied by the American Institute of Stress. Considering this statistic, it should be the objective of employers to implement elements of wellbeing more productively, so as to aid this number. Certainly, this can already be taken into consideration in the phase of recruitment and selection, where perhaps the first step would be to avoid these phrases which encourage a work culture which is overwhelming not only to highly sensitive persons (although especially so), but to people in general.

A perhaps surprising result was the streamlined reaction, or very similar results in terms of responses to other phrases which are used in job advertisements. When these responses are compared to those in figure 10, however, it can be noted that highly sensitive people are extremely concerned about their job tasks being outlined clearly. This desired state of awareness when it comes to competencies can perhaps be related back to the conscientiousness of highly sensitive employees.

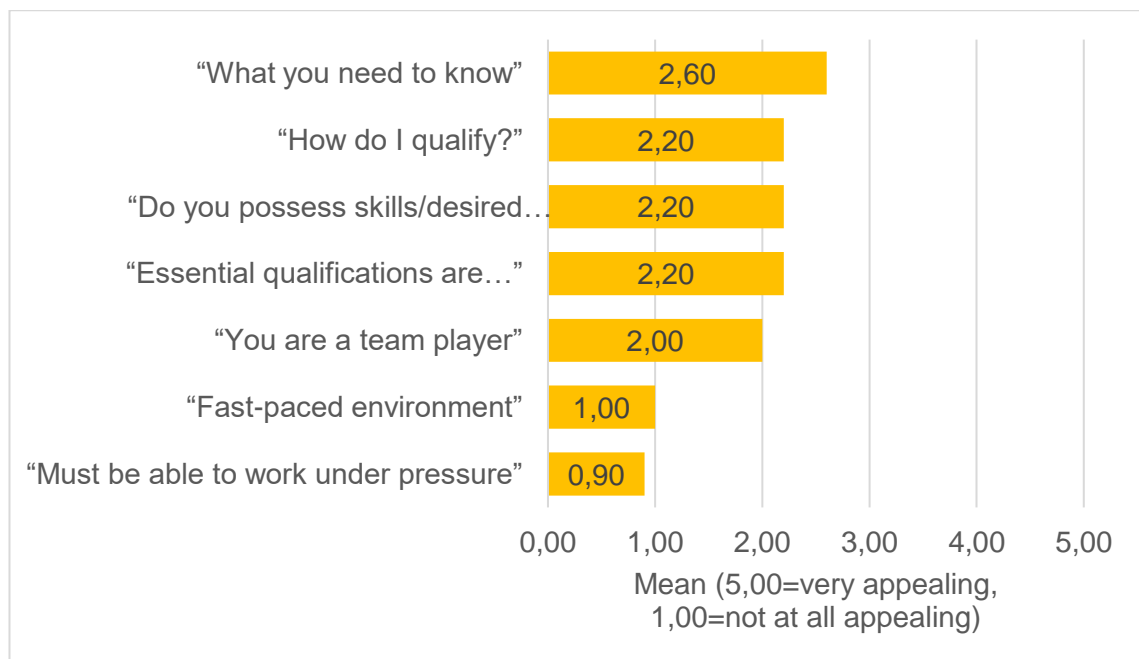


Figure 12. Phrases utilized in job postings that are of appeal to highly sensitive persons

4.4 The value which highly sensitive persons bring to an organization

As mentioned throughout the scope of this research, highly sensitive persons possess many qualities which are of value to organizations. Expressly, highly sensitive persons are intuitively aware of the thoughts and needs of clients, detail-oriented, vigilant, conscientious, loyal and positive impacts on the social atmosphere of a workplace (Aron 1996, 236).

Awareness of possessing this trait also aids in effective use of it. As Aron (1996, 131) says, it can take a very considerable amount of work to reverse negative ideas surrounding the trait of high sensitivity. Thus, it is recognizable when highly sensitive persons are able to distinguish this trait to be valuable to an organization.

Empathy was a central theme in the received responses of highly sensitive persons describing the value of the trait within an organization. In fact, around 17,5% of respondents recognized this trait as a crucial and central one. Goleman (1998, 159) explains empathy to be a person's social radar. These social competences enable for the understanding of others, to having an orientation to service, to helping others develop, to leveraging the influence of diversity as well as creates improved political awareness (Goleman 1998, 162-163).

Besides empathy, highly sensitive described the traits which they bring to the workplace as such:

- “Attention to detail, awareness of behaviours, patterns, trends, insights”
- “A more unique perspective in my job and a different level of dedication”
- “I normally act as mediator between different sides”
- “Promote harmony and inclusiveness, conscientious, good work ethic”
- “Mindful atmosphere and notice colleagues' traits which benefit the company and team”
- “Inclination of how clients and/or co-workers/ management are feeling”
- “Intuition, innovation, positivity, team management, leadership”

If considering cultural factors within an organization, highly sensitive people are found to be a positive influence considering the social atmosphere of an organization (Aron 1996, 236). In whatever team a highly sensitive person is in, they act as a mediator and conscious communicator in understanding the emotional dynamic of their teams.

An interesting observation was also that the responses, in relation to their content as well as voice, were very similar. This also proves the validity of the responses, because certainly if a more generic group was surveyed, the idea of what the respondents bring to a workplace would be much more varied. The highly sensitive people also seemed to have a very similar understanding of high sensitivity in the workplace. The communal voice surrounding the responses gives a very unified and specified look into recruitment and selection processes from the perspective of the highly sensitive person. This can be also considered as an advantage for recruiters and managers, since it is easier to point out well-working processes for this cognitive minority.

4.5 Recommendations from highly sensitive persons to recruiters and managers

If we are to select five prevalent words in the recommendations from highly sensitive people to recruiters or managers, they would be such: constructive, feedback, communication, understanding and honest.

Naturally, these words without context cannot properly be interpreted. As a general summary, it can be said that a communicative recruitment and selection process is highly valued by the highly sensitive person. The following responses support this claim:

- “Be honest and realistic about the expectations; give time for thought”
- “I would appreciate a proper feedback on my lacking points and areas to improve”
- ”Educating recruiters and managers about high sensitivity could greatly improve communication”
- “Thorough communication of what to expect in the process”
- ” Being given information greatly helps highly sensitive people, we like to know all the facts”
- “Knowledge always helps me. The more I know the better I can do”
- “Do not ghost candidates; do not provide a canned response, do have honest empathy”
- “Advise why didn't get job. Show some warmth and personality during interview, make me comfortable”
- “Ensure a personal touch in your communication, be understanding and respectful, communicate results”

Can it, however, on the basis of these results, be said that highly sensitive persons desire honest communication and feedback in recruitment processes over those who do not identify themselves as being highly sensitive? Perhaps not unless the study was further expanded, but what can be said in quite high certainty is that the overstimulation caused on the basis of a non-communicative approach is higher and increasingly discouraging in the case of the highly sensitive person. This, then, contributes to a larger issue, which is the insecurity for highly sensitive people to put themselves in the job market, where they are clearly needed and where their traits are evidently beneficial. When referring back to figure 3, it can be seen that stereotyping directly impacts motivation anxiety, which directly relates to the abovementioned conclusions. Stereotyping, which has elements of stigmatization, is also more prevalent in groups where ‘weaknesses’ or certain characteristics are obvious, of which highly sensitive people are prone to be a target for. Conclusively, it can be said that open and honest communication as well as feedback is not only a desirable trait for organizations as such, but which could, in a more expansive sense, have an impact on the confidence of individuals, especially in the case of highly sensitive persons. One of the responses stated:” I doubt I would have anything to say that they would understand or respond to.” This is a perfect example of a perfectly valid reaction from a highly sensitive person and exactly why it is important for recruiters and managers to take into consideration a diverse cognizance in recruitment and selection processes.

The recommendations from highly sensitive persons went on further to mention:

- “I think HSP is a fairly new concept for many but one that is very important to understand”
- “Safe environment, possibly one to one contact, and with as little distractions as possible”
- “Offer online interviews. Focus on what the person can do rather than just the interview”
- “Avoid group interviews, have a more flexible expectation of what an ideal candidate should be”
- “I perform best in interviews that are casual and friendly (more "conversation" than "interrogation")”
- “In more casual interviews I feel I am able to do a better job in presenting myself”

Again, it can be noted that open-mindedness and the quality of empathy (refer to chapter 4.4), which highly sensitive people note to be one of the qualities which they bring to a workplace, are genuinely appreciated. As mentioned in chapter 2.2.1, Watkin (2002, 91) states that the “use of EI for recruitment decisions leads to 90-percentile success rates.” Emotional intelligence, and its correspondence with empathy, is thus extremely valuable for recruiters and managers to take into consideration. It is also mentioned in chapter 2.3.1 that unstructured interviews are as much as 50% less effective in comparison to structured interviews (Roberts 1997, 11). However, this type of structured interview may not necessarily be the best option for highly sensitive persons, as seen in the responses above. Certainly, it is good to have predetermined questions, but if the interview doesn’t give any room for conversation and the main purpose stands in answering the specified questions, this may not be an ideal situation. The statistic of structured interviews is perhaps something recruiters take perhaps too literally, where not enough room is given for listening to the person themselves because the interview is definitively focused on the questions already predetermined for the interview.

5 Conclusion

The conclusion chapter of this thesis presents the key findings of this research as well as their reliability, validity and relevance. Ethical issues, especially in relation to the survey population, will be discussed. Suggestions for further research and recommendations to human resources practitioners on the topic of the recruitment and selection of highly sensitive persons will also be included. The chapter will conclude with a personal reflection on learning.

5.1 Key findings

The key result of this research is as such: beyond stigmatization of highly sensitive people and their nature, it can be determined that taking simple considerations into account in recruitment and selection processes can greatly influence the harnessing of the true value of highly sensitive persons. And what is more interesting, the empirical results also showed that those elements which are to be taken into consideration are actually valuable not only to highly sensitive persons, but to recruitment and selection processes as a whole.

The outline of a successful recruitment process for a highly sensitive person was determined by the results of the survey. The first elemental topic of discussion is that of which recruitment and selection methods should be used in recruiting and selecting highly sensitive persons. Here, it can be said that recruitment and selection methods with the least amount of stimulation or least amount of 'guess work' were ultimately favoured by the highly sensitive person. Communication, regardless of whether the message to be delivered is considered to be 'negative' or 'positive', should happen respectfully, considering respect of the individual, their time, and their effort dedicated to the application process.

The second foundational topic of discussion was the consideration of job advertisements from the perspective of highly sensitive persons. Here, it is important to highlight that although the motive of highly sensitive persons is not necessarily money. This may be a difficult subject of conversation for the highly sensitive person, as often personality types deemed as 'shy' are underpaid (Aron 1996, 133). It is thus important, so as to avoid 'guess work' for employers to be conscientious, fair and communicative about salary, starting from the job advertisements. Another crucial finding in relation to this topic is the importance of accurately detailing job descriptions. The conscientiousness of highly sensitive people needs to be aware of its tasks, to avoid overwhelm in navigation of a new position altogether. Vague job descriptions are of no service, and accurate job descriptions not only help to set expectations for the applicant, but for the employer as well (Robertson Ryan & Associates 2019).

Thirdly, the value of highly sensitive persons and their traits was discussed from a theoretical perspective, but it was furthermore supported by empirical results. Ultimately, from a perspective of supporting social wellbeing in the workplace, highly sensitive persons are harmonizers and mediators. In decision-making, their intuitiveness presents itself and its value. It is important to note here that highly sensitive people do recognize the value of their traits, but it is not properly valued and respected, they may have difficulty in seeing it as so. This is why it is increasingly important to recognize employees for their strengths, instead of pointing out areas of weakness.

The recommendations chapter to recruiters and managers was perhaps the most interesting, from a researcher's perspective. This is because many of the recommendations could be considered to be universal perspectives from anyone, not necessarily only highly sensitive persons. It was also interesting to see the perspective of highly sensitive persons to communication, that perhaps when considering the highly sensitive person, the stigmatization may be that the highly sensitive person does not want honest and direct feedback, when in fact the case is precisely the opposite. Communicative and honest recruitment and selection processes are key for the confidence and career paths of highly sensitive persons.

5.2 Reliability, validity and relevance and ethical issues

As mentioned briefly in previous chapters, the consideration of highly sensitive persons in designing the survey I believe resulted in very relevant and valid qualitative responses. The alignment of perspectives in relation to the highly sensitive persons view towards recruitment and selection processes was quite staggering. This also aids in making practical implementations from the recruiters and managers side, as the goal is increasingly specified.

One may question if the responses were too streamlined, but here the conscientiousness and awareness of highly sensitive persons and their trait can be considered. A contributor to the validity and relevance can also be considered to be the personal interest of highly sensitive persons in the subject. It was seen in the communication of the survey that those who desired to participate in the survey were interested and curious in doing so, and often considered the topic to be of significant personal interest. The aspect of a largely female response base has been discussed, namely in chapter 4.1, and is thought to have no major implications on the generalizability of results.

The ethicality aspect was mostly in considering the privacy and important contribution of highly sensitive persons, so as to not make any qualitative responses known of whom the respondent was, and to ensure the anonymity of the survey since the very beginning of

conducting it. All of this was considered and implemented successfully. It is also noted that the data will be destroyed after the research, where individuals need not to be concerned that the valuable information they provided would be used for some uncommunicated purpose.

5.3 Further research

Since the research presented is quite young, the opportunities for further research are quite extensive.

The staggering result of the similarity in voice considering qualitative responses was a point of interest. This could be further developed to consider preferences of various cognitively diverse groups, so as to evaluate the alignment of perspectives of various groups, and with that, considering their generic approach to processes and how that is of value.

Of course, the highly sensitive person at work is relatively understudied, and this specific field of study has room for growth. For example, one may consider the placement of highly sensitive persons in teams: in what kinds of teams do highly sensitive persons flourish and how is support from teammates as well as the recognition of their trait reflected in overall wellbeing at work? From a generic perspective, how does support of teammates in recognizing strengths of their colleagues reflected in wellbeing within teams and organizations?

It can be considered that since the scope of this research only focused on one sector of the human resources lifecycle, recruitment and selection, what the considerations are for various steps, such as in onboarding or advancement in an organization in relation to cognitive minorities [or highly sensitive persons specifically].

That is to say, there is still lots of research to be done in building cognitively diverse teams and considering the importance of this very subject.

5.4 Recommendations to human resources practitioners

In recommendations to highly sensitive persons, I would like to especially highlight the importance of communicative recruitment and selection processes. Moreover, the consideration of flexibility when recruiting and selecting new employees.

From this research it can clearly be stated that if an employer is capable of allowing flexibility and personalisation in recruitment and selection processes while approaching the

entire process with non-stigmatized or biased perspectives, the employer attracts increasingly cognitively diverse pools of talent. For example, merely asking the applicant about their preference in relation to interview methods, the applicant and interviewer are both able to harness their strengths and to communicate effectively in an environment that is comfortable to them. Especially in an interview setting that may already be intimidating to the applicant, a consideration of their needs, or merely asking the question: what makes the interview process comfortable and successful for you[?] is a step towards a more inclusive perspective of the process thereof.

Another practical recommendation for recruiters and managers to consider is the conscientiousness of recruitment and selection processes from their own perspective. Considering conscientiousness as a positive trait, it can be said that the highly sensitive person has much valuable input on this subject. The importance of detailing job descriptions is a good example of this. Is the recruiter or manager actually aware of his/her/the organization's needs or is the job advertisement done without the consideration of expectations, alignment with values and the like? Recruiters and managers should carefully consider their needs before presenting them in the form of job advertisements for various applicants to see.

The last major recommendation is to communicate honestly, directly, and without stigmatization. As seen in the empirical results, not doing so can have extreme cognitive consequences. Providing closure on recruitment and selection processes is the responsibility of the organization, and again highlighting the value of conscientiousness as a trait, it is not a desirable result to have conscientious employees wondering about their value as an applicant.

5.5 Reflection of learning

To say that the entirety of this research was interesting would be an understatement. The primary takeaway from the completion of this research has been the personal insight that I have gained on academic writing and research processes overall. As a student hoping to progress to master's and possible PhD level, this has been extremely enlightening.

The perspective I've also gained from working with highly sensitive people in highlighting the value of these individuals at the workplace has been extremely rewarding. I believe that often recruiters or managers may dismiss the importance of considering recruitment and selection processes from the applicant's perspective, and this has become evident that it should not be so throughout the scope of this research. As an aspiring human resource professional, getting this kind of insight into very real and honest responses from a specific group has been educational and insightful. I believe that some of the tools and

learnings from completing this research will follow me in my career path for a very long time. Being a highly sensitive person myself, I have also had the opportunity to reflect on recruitment and selection processes for myself and how I would desire for those to look like, should these tasks be under my supervision.

The theoretical portion also guided me through many interesting pieces of literature that will certainly be of use in my future studies as well. Here it could also be said that an extremely valuable takeaway was the finding of quality sources in relation to research. Although certainly as my research career advances, there will be increasingly more things to consider, the writing of this thesis gave me a good base into this as well.

What was most important to me was taking time to complete the research well. Although this was a lengthy process, the reflective journey of writing was well-needed and valuable.

An immense thank you to the participants of the survey, all those who supported me, my tirelessly intelligent and helpful thesis advisor, my friend Abdellatif who kept motivating me to never give up. Writing a thesis during a global pandemic is no easy task, so my thank you is most sincere.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Survey

Recruiting the highly sensitive person: considerations and their significance

 Mandatory fields are marked with an asterisk (*) and must be filled in to complete the form.

A highly sensitive person can be described as an individual that absorbs, feels and reacts to as well as interprets information, even if subtle, at a heightened depth. This heightened sensitivity often also drives increased conscientiousness but can also result in a state of being easily overstimulated. (Aron 1996, xvii-xxii.)

The purpose of this research is to determine the recruitment experience from the perspective of highly sensitive persons, and namely, to outline the means of which could improve the recruitment process for the highly sensitive person. This is considered on the basis of not necessarily tailoring the recruitment process to the highly sensitive person but taking into account minor details that could significantly grow the talent pool reached. The needs of a highly sensitive persons in the workplace can be quite evidently determined. Highly sensitive people can be described as 'intuitive visionaries' and often make, in many ways, exemplary employees. However, for their strengths to be realized, it is important to pay attention to the needs thereof.

The survey follows the life cycle of recruitment and its various components including elements of recruitment and selection, added value of highly sensitive persons in the workplace as well as vacancy related factors. The questions have been organized in part in the order of the life cycle of recruitment, but also taking into consideration the interest of the respondent and capturing their attention throughout the survey.

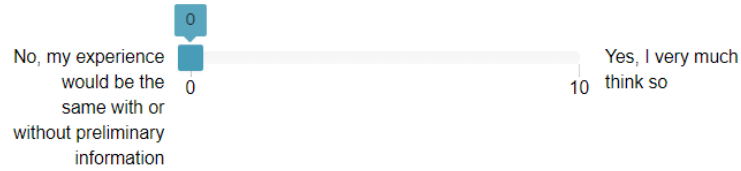
This survey is to be used solely for the purposes of this thesis and the data will be destroyed upon the completion of the research. The approximate time of completing this survey is 10-15 minutes.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any additional questions or concerns at: mariellen.vanska@myy.haaga-helia.fi.

1. How comfortable are you with the following interview approaches? *

	Very uncomfortable	Somewhat uncomfortable	Neutral	Somewhat comfortable	Very comfortable
Traditional interview (at/in the company office)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Video interview	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Individual interview (you are the only interviewee)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Group interview (you are interviewed with other candidates)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
One interviewer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Several interviewers (panel interview)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Behavioural interview (i.e. how would you act/respond to certain situations?)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Work sample interview (i.e. the presentation of a new or old project you will/have complete(d) in relation to the position you're applying for)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. Would having preliminary information about an interview (i.e. possible questions) significantly improve your performance in the interview? *



3. When you have applied for a position, what attracted you to it? Please indicate X for 1-3 of the factors most important to you: *

- Good salary and benefits
- Dream job or career
- Company culture
- Community and future work colleagues
- Flexibility of work (i.e. remote working opportunities)
- Proximity and physical location of workplace (i.e. distance to travel, city)
- Diversity and ethics of the organization
- Training and development opportunities
- Seeming easiness of work
- Internationality or international opportunity
- Leadership opportunities
- Other

You can select from 1 up to 3 options
Selected options: 0

4. Please indicate the importance of the following elements in a job posting *

	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
The name of the organization seeking for an employee	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Organizational values	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Organizational mission	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Opportunities the organization offers (I.e. in terms of training and development)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Description of suitable candidate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Description of job duties	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Salary	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Benefits (e.g. health coverage, maternity and paternity leave)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Contact information to inquire about the job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The aesthetic layout of the advertisement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Next

5. How appealing do you find the following job expressions in a job advertisement? *

	Very appealing	Appealing	Neutral	Somewhat appealing	Not at all appealing
“Essential qualifications are...”	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
“What you need to know”	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
“Do you possess skills/desired qualifications listed...?”	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
“How do I qualify?”	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
“Must be able to work under pressure”	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
“Fast-paced environment”	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
“You are a team player”	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. How important are the following aspects to you in terms of communication on the final recruitment decision? *

	Not important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
Overall decision	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reasons for the decision	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Personalization (i.e. referring to the candidate by name)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tips on how you can improve	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. Please explain in a few words how you feel if you are not communicated about the recruitment decision at all? *

75 characters left

8. Please give some suggestions that you would like to make to recruiters or managers based on your recruitment experiences, namely as a highly sensitive person? *

100 characters left

9. Please explain in a few words what you feel you as a highly sensitive person bring to the workplace? *

75 characters left

[Previous](#)

[Next](#)

10. Are you...? *

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to disclose/other

11. Where do you currently live? *

- Europe
- North America
- Asia
- Australia
- Africa

12. Where are you in your career life? *

- Student
- Early career
- Mid career
- Late career
- Retired from work life

Appendix 2. Example of a Facebook post on a group for Highly Sensitive Persons



Highly Sensitive person

2 March at 11:25 · 🌐



Hello, all my highly sensitive friends!

I am currently conducting on research on the recruitment and selection of highly sensitive people, in effort to shed light on how employers can understand and, well, be more sensitive to our needs. This is not in effort to tailor the recruitment and selection process to highly sensitive people, but to make changes that will attract HSPs while acting in no hindrance to attracting other potential employees. More importantly, WHY highly sensitive people make good employees and why this topic is of importance. This research is done as a part of my bachelor's thesis, and I would GREATLY appreciate if you took 10-15 minutes to answer my survey. Your contribution means the world, and I hope this to be a helpful tool to shed light on the HSP community. Thank you in advance!

Mariellen Vänskä

P.s the survey is completely anonymous and the data will be destroyed after the research is complete

<https://link.webpolsurveys.com/S/80A2812C6304C9C0>

