



**UNIVERSITY  
OF TURKU**

Turku School of  
Economics

# **Enhancing Labor Migration in Finnish Companies – An HRM Recruiting Perspective**

International Business

Bachelor's thesis

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27.11.2024

Turku

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The originality of this thesis has been checked in accordance with the University of Turku quality assurance system using the Turnitin Originality Check service.

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**Subject:** International Business

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**Title:** Enhancing labor migration in Finnish companies: an HRM recruiting perspective.

**Supervisor:** D.Sc Henna Leino

**Number of pages:** 37

**Date:** 27.11.2024

Labor migration is a critical driver of global economic growth, providing companies access to diverse talent pools and addressing skill shortages. Particularly in countries like Finland, where labor migration is a vital part of our economy. According to researchers labor migration is the key driver of future growth in Finland. This thesis provides a comprehensive view of labor migration and theories regarding the phenomenon.

This thesis examines how human resource management (HRM) practices, especially the recruitment process can enhance labor migration, focusing on strategies to attract and recruit migrant workers, as well as strategies to help enhance inclusivity in the workplace. Introducing existing literature and studies on the subject, to help identify key challenges such as regulatory barriers, cultural integration, and biases linked to the recruitment process. This thesis highlights the importance of proactive HRM practices, including strategies to help understand and mitigate biases linked to recruiting, as well as introducing strategies to help enhance inclusiveness and labor migration.

The findings suggest that companies that adopt innovative and supportive HRM strategies not only improve their ability to attract migrant workers but also foster long-term employee engagement and retention. Companies that foster diversity and inclusion gain a lot of advantages. Diversity increases the potential for creativity and innovation as individuals with varied skills and perspectives come together to generate ideas. Studies show that the impact of diversity in the workplace is evident, which drives higher revenues and better innovations. This thesis provides actionable insights for HR professionals and policymakers to create sustainable frameworks that promote labor mobility and global workforce integration.

**Key words:** Labor migration, HRM, inclusivity, diversity, recruitment

Kandidutkielma

**Oppiaine:** Kansainvälinen liiketoiminta

**Tekijä:** Jenna Päkki

**Otsikko:** Työperäisen maahanmuuton lisääminen Suomalaisissa yrityksissä, henkilöstöjohtamisen rekrytinnin näkökulma

**Ohjaaja:** KTT Henna Leino

**Sivumäärä:** 37

**Päivämäärä:** 27.11.2024

Työperäinen maahanmuutto on tärkeä tekijä globaalin talouskasvun kannalta, sillä se tarjoaa yrityksille mahdollisuuden hyödyntää monipuolisia osaajia ympäri maailman ja vastata työvoimapulaan. Tämä on erityisen merkittävää maissa kuten Suomessa, jossa työperäinen maahanmuutto on keskeinen osa taloutta. Tutkijoiden mukaan työperäinen maahanmuutto on avainasemassa Suomen tulevaisuuden talouskasvussa. Tämä tutkielma tarjoaa kattavan näkökulman työperäiseen maahanmuuttoon sekä ilmiöön liittyviin teorioihin.

Tässä tutkielmassa tarkastellaan, kuinka henkilöstöjohtamisen (HRM) käytännöt, erityisesti rekrytointiprosessi, voivat edistää työperäistä maahanmuuttoa. Työssä keskitytään strategioihin, joilla voidaan houkuttaa ja rekrytoida ulkomaalaisia työntekijöitä, sekä keinoihin parantaa työpaikkojen inklusiivisuutta. Tutkielmassa esitellään aiheeseen liittyvää kirjallisuutta ja tutkimuksia, jotka auttavat tunnistamaan keskeisiä haasteita, kuten sääntelyesteitä, kulttuurista integroitumista ja rekrytointiprosessiin liittyviä haitallisia ennakkoluuloja. Työssä korostetaan proaktiivisten HRM-käytäntöjen merkitystä, mukaan lukien strategiat, joilla voidaan ymmärtää ja vähentää rekrytointiin liittyviä ennakkoluuloja, sekä keinot edistää inklusiivisuutta ja työperäistä maahanmuuttoa.

Tutkielman johtopäätökset osoittavat, että yritykset, jotka omaksuvat innovatiivisia ja tukevia HRM-strategioita, eivät ainoastaan paranna kykyään houkuttaa ulkomaalaisia työntekijöitä, vaan myös edistävät pitkäaikaista työntekijöiden sitoutumista ja pysyvyyttä. Yritykset, jotka edistävät monimuotoisuutta ja inklusiivisuutta, hyötyvät siitä merkittävästi, monimuotoisuus lisää luovuuden ja innovaatioiden mahdollisuuksia, kun erilaisilla taidoilla ja näkökulmilla varustetut yksilöt yhdistävät voimansa uusien ideoiden kehittämiseksi. Tutkimukset osoittavat, että työpaikkojen monimuotoisuudella on merkittävä vaikutus, mikä johtaa suurempiin tuottoihin ja parempiin innovaatioihin. Tämä tutkielma tarjoaa käytännönläheisiä näkemyksiä henkilöstöammattilaisille, päättäjille ja johtamisen opiskelijoille kestävien toimintamallien luomiseksi, jotka edistävät työperäistä maahanmuuttoa ja globaalin työvoiman integroitumista.

**Avainsanat:** Työperäinen maahanmuutto, henkilöstöjohtaminen, inklusiivisuus, monimuotoisuus, rekrytointi

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

Migration has been around for as long as humans have. In 2020 the global estimate was that globally there were around 281 million migrants in the world, which is about 3.6% of the World's population. The number of estimated international migrants has grown over the last five decades. Since the 1970s the number of migrants living in countries they were not born in has tripled. (World Migration Report 2022, p.21.)

Migrant is a broad term that has not been defined under international law. Still, it grasps the general understanding of a person who has relocated from the country of their origin or usual residence to move away across international borders either temporarily or permanently. There are many different reasons for migration, including work migration and studying abroad. (World Migration Report 2022, p.21.)

Migration has been an under-theorized field of research for a long time. Despite this, migration is a significant global phenomenon, and gaining a more fundamental understanding of the topic gives us a better understanding of societal change. Migration theories have significantly remained in the 20th-century concepts, which are still widely used in research. These theories include the push and pull theory, which remains valid. New theories and studies have not been a key interest amongst researchers throughout recent years. One reason for this might be migrations' flammable nature to policy. Migration researchers have also stated that a universal or comprehensive theory on migration will never arise because of its complexity. (de Haas 2014, pp. 4-5.)

Even though migration has been a widely under-theorized field, there are new theories including Carling's 2002 concept about involuntary immobility as well as the capabilities approach by Sen (1989), that sees migration as a function of people's aspirations and capabilities including an understanding of individuals given set of opportunities. Sen's capabilities framework is seen as a better alternative to the traditional push and pull factors. The framework introduces how people's capability determines whether they want to stay in the country they currently live in or whether they want to leave. (de Haas 2014, p.4.)

ILO, International Labour Organization, estimated that in 2017 there were 164 million migrant workers, which contributes to 4,7% of all workers (ILO 2017). Migrants contribute to the labor force significantly in various countries. In countries like Finland, labor migration will become vital

for future economic growth due to the nation's demographic structure. According to Tilastokeskus the changes within migration already show positive results. Migration has led to a 17,7% increase in the population of individuals born in 1987. After adjusting for mortality rates, this age group has experienced a net growth of 15,4%. (Tilastokeskus 2022.)

The population of Finland is estimated to start to decrease in 2031. For 8 years in a row, Finland has had a higher mortality rate than birth rate. The economic dependency ratio for Finland in 2022 was 130, which means that for every hundred employed persons there were 130 unemployed ones. The economic dependency ratio was 133 in 2021 and 142 in 2020. (Tilastokeskus 2023.)

In many fields, Finland has been able to patch the gap from the shrinking labor market, but the need for labor migration will only grow in the future, especially in healthcare, education, and early childhood education. The nursing shortage has especially increased in recent years. The number of labor migrants has been historically high in recent years, but we cannot seem to reach the same peak levels that we had a few years ago. (Lakka 2024.)

Labor migration plays a crucial role in addressing imbalances in the labor market and fostering economic growth. Within the EU, enhanced cross-border labor mobility helps to optimize resource allocation and adapt to demographic challenges such as aging populations (Cohen-Goldner et al. 2008, pp. 864-868.) In the European Union (EU), employers serve as pivotal actors in labor migration, acting as primary decision-makers or access points for work permits. Their role is crucial in facilitating the granting of these permits, especially for newly graduated international students and candidates from non-EU countries. This phrasing emphasizes the formal nature of the employer's influence over work access within the EU. (OECD and EU 2016, pp. 133-135.)

The growth and development of modern organizations rely heavily on the effective utilization of human resources. Human resources is widely recognized as the most critical asset of any organization (Ahmady et al. 2016 p. 417). Research highlights that HR practitioners are often responsible for the implementation of ethics awareness programs at the management level, underscoring their influence in shaping ethical and inclusive organizational cultures. (Bennington 2007, pp. 139-144).

HR professionals are pivotal in identifying talent through recruitment processes and applications, ensuring fair opportunities for all candidates (Bennington 2007, pp. 139-144). HR managers must carefully select tools and techniques that align with job requirements and organizational culture.

Selection decisions should prioritize candidates who meet the job specifications and exhibit values and attitudes that align with the company's needs (Hsu et al. 2000, pp. 428-429).

The role of HRM in enhancing labor migration is a widely unresearched field. HR has an important role in recruiting talent globally and locally (Bennington 2007, pp.139-144). Examining recruitment processes is crucial for identifying and addressing potential biases that hinder workplace diversity. Analyzing these processes often reveals patterns that may undermine efforts to create inclusive environments. This area remains underexplored despite its significance, highlighting a notable research gap.

## **1.2 The aim of this thesis**

The significance of this topic lies in its relevance, particularly in the context of demographic shifts that present substantial challenges to the economy. As previously mentioned, these changes have led to a shrinking labor market alongside increasing demand for specific services due to an aging population. This imbalance underscores a critical shortage of working-age individuals to sustain economic growth and meet the rising service demands. Labor migration emerges as a viable and essential solution to address this gap, providing the necessary workforce to support the economy and meet societal needs effectively. (Valtioneuvosto 2024.)

The reason for choosing the HRM perspective is that HR plays a key role in employing migrant workers. By examining this issue through an HR lens, the aim is to gain a deeper understanding of global practices that have been implemented to address labor shortages and propose strategies for fostering more inclusive workplaces. This thesis aims to gather different strategies for human resource management that help to create a more inclusive workplace as well as enhance labor migration.

Equal employment opportunity is one of the main focuses of HRM today (Bennington 2007, p.39). One of the most significant issues in HRM is employment recruitment and selection, as it remains one of the least scrutinized HR processes (Petersen et al. 2000, pp. 810-813). This thesis aims to find out if the current recruitment process is biased and if it is, what strategies could be implemented to mitigate it.

This thesis aims to bring awareness to the recruitment process and gather information on its nature. As mentioned, we need to investigate the recruitment processes and address any biases to enhance labor migration. The aim is to answer the following questions:

- What is labor based migration?
- What is the role of HRM in fair and equal recruiting processes?
- What strategies could be implemented to enhance labor migration and inclusiveness?

These questions aim to answer the main question How can Finnish companies enhance labor migration, from an HRM recruiting perspective? This thesis aims to gather strategies that could be relevant for a Finnish company wanting to attract global talent. After reading this thesis the reader will get an overall idea of migration and strategies on how to enhance it, how to address and mitigate biases, and how to make the overall company more inclusive.

## **2 Labor based migration**

### **2.1 Theoretical background on migration**

#### **2.1.1 Neoclassical Economic Theory of Migration**

The earliest and most well-known theory of international migration is the Neoclassical Economic Theory of Migration. This was developed by Lewis (1954), Ranis and Fei (1961), Harris and Todaro (1970), and Todaro (1976). This theory explains labor migration in terms of economic development. There are different approaches to this theory which are the micro- and macroeconomic approaches. (Massey et al. 1993, pp. 433-436.)

The macroeconomic approach suggests that migration results from geographic differences in labor supply and demand. This means that countries that have restricted capital and abundant labor have lower wages. Whereas in countries that have abundant capital and restricted labor have higher wages. This wage differential encourages labor migration from low-wage to high-wage nations. This will gradually adjust labor supply leading to higher wages in capital-poor countries and reducing wages in capital-rich ones. Capital flows in the opposite direction, from capital-rich countries to capital-poor ones, because of high returns in these markets. This also includes human capital where highly skilled workers move to capitalize on high returns for their skills. (Massey et al. 1993, pp. 433-436.)

The microeconomic approach suggests that migration is an individual's investment decision. (Sjaastad, 1962; Todaro, 1969, 1976, 1989; Todaro and Maruszko, 1987). In this approach individuals weigh the costs and benefits of migration, migrating if they expect a positive net return, typically monetary. In this approach, migration is seen as an investment in human capital, where individuals relocate themselves to maximize their skills, productivity, and wages. (Massey et al. 1993, pp. 433-436.)

#### **2.1.2 Push and pull theory**

There are many different theories that explain labor migration. One of these theories is the theory of push and pull factors. Push and pull factors mean factors that work together to explain why people are migrating. Push factors explain what is pushing them away from one country to another and pull factors are factors that pull them into a new country. (European Parliament 2020.)

There are three significant push and pull factors which are categorized in three broad areas, these areas are the economic, social, and political factors (Urbanski 2022, pp. 4-5). Social and political factors are factors due to ethnicity, religion, race, politics or culture, along the side with war and conflict. These can push people to flee their own homes. Those who escape armed conflict or persecution are often humanitarian refugees, settling in countries that accept asylum seekers, typically in the nearest safe nation. (European Parliament 2020.) Social and Political factors are commonly categorized as push factors (Urbanski 2022, pp. 4-5).

The second significant factor is demographic and economic reasons. Demographic changes influence migration patterns. Population growth or decline, as well as the age structure, affect economic growth, job prospects in origin countries, and change migration policies in destination countries. Poor labor conditions, high unemployment, and a weak economy often drive economic migration. Pull factors include higher wages, better job opportunities, improved living standards, and access to education. (European Parliament 2020.) Many countries experience challenges due to the emigration of skilled workers, for example, numerous African countries, already burdened by high rates of infectious diseases like AIDS and Malaria experience heightened strain on their healthcare systems because nurses emigrate to access higher wages and better living conditions. (Kline 2003, pp. 109.)

The third factor is environmental and climate migration reasons. The environment has been a significant driver in migration for a long time. Natural disasters such as floods, hurricanes, and earthquakes drive people to migrate. Climate change is anticipated to intensify extreme weather events, further exacerbating migration patterns. (European Parliament 2020.)

According to a study made by Zimmerman (1996) push-supply migration affects only the aggregate supply curve, while pull-demand migration involves migration driven by a shift in the demand curve, which then affects also the supply curve. Factors influencing the aggregate demand that lead to migration are considered pull factors, while internal or external factors affecting supply linked to migration are classified as push factors.

### 2.1.3 Sen's study on freedom of choice

Sen's 1988 study on Freedom of choice introduces how people's capability determines whether they want to stay in the country they currently live in or whether they want to leave. In his study he introduces how freedom plays a role in choosing whether they want to migrate or not. He also takes into factor that people have different sets of capabilities and for example, a disabled person doesn't

have the same set of capabilities as a person who's not disabled. (Sen 1988) The study highlights the relationships between migration patterns, seasonal, temporary, and permanent, and the factors that influence these decisions. These can be explained by personal characteristics that include education level, age, gender, and health or by household dynamics and financial capacity.

Environmental conditions play a big factor in the migration processes. (Assaduzzaman et al. 2020, pp. 653-654.)

Freedom has been examined for a long time from two distinct perspectives. One is the "positive" view, which emphasizes what individuals can achieve or choose and focuses on their ability to fulfill their potential. The other perspective is the "negative" one, which defines freedom as the absence of interference or restraint, whether it is done by other individuals, government or an institution that restricts one's choices or actions. An example of this could be that if a person is deprived and hungry due to low wages or unemployment, not because anyone directly barred them from seeking better opportunities, their "negative" freedom remains intact, even though their "positive" freedom to avoid hunger is severely compromised. (Sen 1988.)

Sen's study introduces an approach that migration involves exercising "freedom of choice" by moving to a place where an individual has greater opportunities or fewer restrictions. Sen's approach and ideas on freedom of choice help to reframe migration. Migration can also be seen as a means for individuals to expand their capabilities, especially in cases where their current environment restricts their ability to achieve a fulfilling life. (Sen 1988) Planned migration in response to climate stresses and represents a strategic adaptation option, allowing individuals to diversify livelihoods and reduce vulnerability. However, unequal access to resources and opportunities means that migration is not achievable or a free choice for all. (Assaduzzaman et al. 2020, pp. 653-654.)

## **2.2 Labor migration in the World**

In 2019 it was estimated that 169 million migrant workers were part of the global workforce, which contributes to around 62% of the total 272 million migrants around the world. When looking at the distribution of migrant workers about 67% resided in high-income countries which is roughly around 113.9 million workers. Middle-income countries accounted for 29% of the total, representing approximately 49 million migrant workers. Only 6,1 million which is 3,6% were found in low-income countries. (World Migration Report 2022, p.36.)

There also has been a shift in where labor migrants locate themselves. From 2013 to 2019 the share of migrant workers in high-income countries dropped by 7,3 percentage points from 74,7% to 67,4%, while middle-income countries saw an increase of 7,8% percentage points from 11,7% to 19,5%. This can be explained by economic growth in middle-income countries and their adjusted immigration policies. In high-income countries, migrant workers make up 18.2% of the total workforce, compared to 1.4-2.2% of the total workforce in middle-income countries and 2.3% in low-income countries. (World Migration Report 2022, p.36.)

The EU plays a crucial role in attracting migrant workers. EU can introduce recruitment pathways that individual member states might not otherwise consider, creating new opportunities to bring in skilled labor. For example, EU Directives have introduced previously undefined permit categories, enabling employers to recruit candidates who meet specific criteria even if final admission decisions remain under national jurisdiction. Ultimately, the EU's role in supporting a more cohesive, efficient, and inclusive approach to labor migration could help address skill shortages, especially as employers seek skilled labor across borders. (OECD and EU 2016, pp.133-135.)

### **2.3 Labor migration in Finland**

As mentioned in the introduction for 8 years in a row, Finland has had a higher mortality rate than birth rate. Migration has been said to be a vital tool to patch Finland's demographic structure. The results are already showing. Migration has led to a 17.7 percent increase in the number of individuals born in 1987. According to Statistics Finland (Tilastokeskus 2022), immigration will be the sole contributor to Finland's population growth in the future.

Tilastokeskus published a new population estimate, which states that over the long term, Finland's net migration gain will be 40,000 people annually, whereas the previous assumption made in 2021 predicted that migration will be 15,000 people annually. These estimates have a big impact on many areas. There is an imbalance between public revenues and expenditures, which is known as the sustainability gap. (Tilastokeskus 2024.)

The Ministry Of Finance estimates that the sustainability gap is approximately two percent relative to GDP, or around seven billion euros at the 2028 level. Last spring Ministry Of Finance indicated that an increase of 7500 people in annual net migration would reduce the sustainability gap by an estimated 0,3 percentage points. This new estimate means that migration could shrink the sustainability gap by billions. (Kauppalehti, 2024.)

According to the Confederation of Finnish Industries by 2030 the working-age population will be reduced by about 130 000 people. Immigration can make up for some of the growing need for labor and skills. According to them, Finland must promote work-based immigration in order to alleviate skills shortages in the Finnish labor market and recruitment problems in companies.

(Elinkeinoelämän keskusliitto 2024.)

The majority of foreign workers are citizens of EU/EEA countries who don't need permission to work or enter. Foreign students are an important target group as immigrants, which is why foreign students need to be able to enter and remain in our labor market more easily. According to the Confederation of Finnish Industries, this can be done by emphasizing the importance of internships, Finnish work experience, and sufficient language skills. (Elinkeinoelämän keskusliitto 2024.)

In the year 2021, a total of 11428 first residence permits were granted based on work. In 2020 the number was 8508. There are many different types of work-based residence permits depending on what kind of work an immigrant in Finland does. Slightly more than half of the positive first work permit decisions were employee residence permits. In 2021 5 929 permits were employee resident permits. Altogether 1293 positive residence permit decisions were made for special experts. Most specialists move to Finland from Russia, India, and China. Seasonal worker permits were continuing to rise. A total of 15892 seasonal permits were given in 2021. Most of the seasonal workers come from Ukraine and work on farms. (Maahanmuuttovirasto 2022.)

The recent headline in Finland has been our government's program where the migrant worker needs to leave Finland in three months (six months for experts and management) after the employment contract ends if the person hasn't formed a new employment contract. The new program also states that it is the employer's responsibility to inform of this to Maahanmuuttovirasto. This has sparked a lot of conversation and a lot of it is criticism. Many believe that the three-month period is too short and makes Finland appear uninviting to potential workers. The job recruitment process can also take up to 6 months, which means it may also be impossible to get an answer within the three-month period. (Valtioneuvosto 2024.) The government proposal is part of a series of reforms to make the lives of immigrants in Finland increasingly uncertain and monitored (Yle 2024).

This program is considered politically biased and many feel that it doesn't take Finland's interests into account in the long run. Many outlets have stated that the country's image and attractiveness of Finland have been severely affected since the Government made this program entry. (Yle 2024.)

According to the University of Helsinki, the government proposal has caused indirect damage to the university's reputation as an employer, as well as to the view of Finland as a country of work and residence. Also, Business Finland has stated that the recording of the new program alone has already made it difficult to attract international experts to Finland. According to Business Finland International experts have felt that the entry communicates a lack of appreciation and that Finland is not interested in holding on to them. (Yle 2024.)

### 3 The Evolving Role of HRM in Modern Recruitment

#### 3.1 The role of HRM in the recruitment processes

The role of HRM, Human Resources Management has become increasingly complex and HRM has evolved its nature due to evolving expectations around governance and legal compliance (Pinnington et al. 2007). Human resource management has become a strategic cornerstone in organizations. HR today plays a crucial role in aligning people management with business objectives. This change in HRM reflects the importance of using human resources strategically, not only to drive organizational success but also to enhance employee engagement, motivation, and satisfaction. HRM is recognized as essential in building a workforce that is both productive and fulfilling, balancing both employee needs and company goals. (Stone et al. 2024. p.4.)

HRM has many different roles and responsibilities. Ulrich (1997) proposed four different roles for HR professionals which were strategic partner, change agent, administrative expert, and employee champion. A strategic partner aligns HR and business strategy together, an administrative expert reengineers organizations processes, an employee champion listens and responds to employees, and a change agent manages transformations and change. (Ulrich 1997, pp. 24-25.)

HR has an important role in recognizing talent via applications and HR is responsible for many recruitment processes (Bennington 2007, pp.139-144). HR practices can be organized into three main policy domains, each aiming to enhance different facets of employee performance and the effectiveness of HR systems. The first policy is Employee Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities, which means HR policies that develop the necessary competencies for employees to succeed in their roles. The second policy domain is Employee Motivation and Effort, this policy aims to encourage employees to contribute discretionary effort toward organizational goals. The third policy focuses on Opportunities for Contribution, this policy ensures that employees can apply their skills and efforts meaningfully within their roles. Staffing policies including recruitment, selection, and training are closely tied to building workforce knowledge and skills which is included in the first policy. (Lepak et al. 2006, pp.217–271.)

When examining HR practices the term talent management (TM) and Global Talent Management (GTM) come up regularly. Talent management is considered a set of traditional HR practices such as recruitment, development, and succession planning, On a broader scale it can be seen as managing talent pools to ensure a consistent flow of employees into key positions. Some

researchers also view TM as an HR “mindset” for a more structured strategy for maintaining leadership continuity and optimizing human capital. Effective talent management is strategically valuable for organizations. (Lewis & Heckman 2006, pp. 139-141.) GTM Global Talent Management focuses on attracting, selecting, developing, and retaining top talent in key strategic roles globally, while taking into account varying national contexts and organizational priorities (Scullion et al. 2010, pp. 4-5).

Organizations can hire employees either through internal mobility or external mobility. Internal mobility means assigning employees to new roles within the same organization. External mobility, on the other hand, refers to recruiting new employees from outside the organization. (Bidwell, 2011). The global movement of labor force driven by socioeconomic shifts and globalization has changed how organizations manage global talent flows. Globalization and the boundaryless career model have redefined talent acquisition, prompting organizations to leverage both expatriation and in patriation. This shift reflects the need for organizations to remain flexible and competitive in an increasingly globalized market. (Scullion et al. 2010, pp. 61-63.)

The field of strategic management has seen significant growth both in academic as well as practical interest over the past two decades. Since strategy became an established area in management studies, organization strategists relied primarily on a single framework called the (SWOT) Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The SWOT analysis is one of the most used strategic tools globally. (Pyut et al. 2023, pp.1-2.) One perspective in strategic management is the resource-based view (RBV). Resource-based view is a managerial framework that identifies and assesses the strategic resources a firm can leverage to achieve and sustain a competitive advantage. Resource-based view highlights how resources that are valuable, rare, and difficult to imitate can create long-term advantages. (Barney et al. 2001, pp. 625-626.)

HR fosters a competitive edge for organizations by blending strategic vision with operational efficiency, seamlessly integrating a focus on both people and processes. HR professionals play a key role in balancing the support of daily operations with the leadership of transformative strategic initiatives. These roles together enable a balanced approach that enhances the organization’s ability to compete and adapt in a dynamic environment. (Ulrich 1997, pp.25-27.)

In today's world (CSR) Corporate Social Responsibility is gaining its recognition along the sides of traditional economic objectives, still according to studies HR managers are not making active efforts in enforcing Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) obligations. In the USA, the protections

for HR managers who do enforce these obligations are often insufficient, despite many business codes of ethics emphasizing a duty to obey the law. (Greenwood et al. 2007, pp. 119-121.) HR managers often face unique ethical challenges while enforcing legal and ethical standards, particularly around EEO. HR managers are often in a position where they need to take a clear ethical stance on issues other managers might overlook (Marchington 2001; Wilkinson 1996).

In the recruitment process, deciding which candidates receive job offers plays a crucial role in shaping diversity and inclusion, especially for candidates of immigrant origin. Although public administration recruitment practices are structured to prevent discrimination with standardized interview questionnaires and scoring sheets, studies show that informal biases and stereotypes can still affect decision-making. (Lang, 2021.)

### **3.2 Studies Demonstrating Bias in Human Resource Practices**

Discrimination in the labor market has been widely acknowledged as a serious issue both by scholars and policymakers. Two essential questions for understanding and addressing discrimination are: to what extent does it occur, and how can it be effectively reduced? (Åslund et al. 2012, p.82.)

A recent study made in Finland shows that the skills of migrants are not yet fully utilized in the Finnish labor market. In this study over 20% of migrant workers, believed that less expertise was needed in their current job compared to their previous one: 20 percent of women and nearly 25 percent of men shared this view. Those with higher education qualifications experienced more difficulties finding jobs that matched their level of education compared to those with lower educational qualifications. One reason for this might be that their previous degree has not been recognized in Finland, which has led them to complete a lower-level degree in Finland to make the job hunt easier. Another possible cause could be discrimination. (Tilastokeskus 2023.)

In a study conducted by Risberg and Romani (2021) aligned with the Statistics Finland study (2023). Risberg and Romani explored different themes related to the recruitment of migrants. A key concern raised by the interviewees was the difficulty in assessing migrants' qualifications, particularly when their degrees and competencies did not align with local standards. For instance, in the IT industry, there were doubts about the quality of education received by foreign candidates, especially those from countries like India. (Risberg et al. 2021.)

The study also found that the language barrier was linked to the potential inefficiency of hiring migrants. Some candidates claimed to be fluent in the local language in this case Swedish but hiring

managers were found to be skeptical and preferred candidates who could start working immediately without any language barriers (Risberg et al, 2021). These findings went along with the Finnish study where regardless of their level of education, immigrants most often found the lack of proficiency in Finnish or Swedish as the main reason for their difficulties in finding work. More than half of those who had experienced challenges in finding a job felt that inadequate language skills were the primary barrier to getting a job. (Tilastokeskus 2023.)

In the 2021 study conducted by Lang in Berlin Germany, the findings were similar compared to (2023) and (2021) studies conducted in Finland and Sweden. The Lang study suggested that even though interview panels followed set criteria for the candidates like motivation or communication skills, some subjective factors came into discussions post-interview. These subjective impressions sometimes influence final decisions, potentially allowing for unconscious biases. While stereotypes were rarely openly discussed due to the commitment to equal treatment, hints of bias were sometimes evident. For example, candidates of immigrant origin were occasionally praised for “speaking good German,” signaling surprise based on assumptions about language skills in immigrant communities. (Lang 2021.)

In the Risberg and Romani study, some managers admitted to having hesitations due to the uncertainty about how foreign candidates would align with the existing team dynamics. The unfamiliarity with candidates’ backgrounds and skills created a reluctance to take risks in hiring, leading many companies to favor candidates with more conventional, familiar profiles. (Risberg et al. 2021.)

These studies conducted in Sweden (2021) and Germany (2021) show that while formalized and standardized processes in public administration aim to treat all candidates equally, informal factors like how foreign candidates would align with the existing team dynamics or how well the candidate spoke the local language still shaped hiring decisions. However, in cases where diversity is an organizational priority, these informal practices could also benefit candidates of immigrant origin by giving them a slight edge, especially in workplaces aiming to promote inclusion. (Lang 2021; Risberg et al. 2021.)

University of Manchester researched in 2012 to examine how implicit biases, especially based on ethnicity affect the selection of candidates for job positions. In this research, researchers posted two job advertisements, one for a lectureship in health psychology and the other one for a postgraduate administrator role. Then they presented identical job applications with identical CVs. The only difference between the two was the apparent ethnicities in the applications. The research aimed to

observe participants' eye movements to determine which parts of the CV they focused on. The results suggested that implicit biases significantly impacted the selection and resulted in who was chosen as a better candidate. (Beattie et al, 2012.)

Diaconia University of Applied Sciences did a campaign in 2018 with famous Finnish entrepreneurs. Tuomas Enbuske, Anne Kukkohovi, Jari Sarasvuo, and Meri-Tuuli Väntsi sent a total of 54 job applications to open positions in their respective fields. The resumes were their own with their actual information, but the names were changed to names commonly associated with Romani people. None of them received a single interview invitation. (Kauppalehti, 2019.) This campaign highlighted the biases embedded within recruitment processes, demonstrating that simply having a particular name can prevent candidates from reaching the interview stage.

A Swedish study conducted in 2007 examined name-based discrimination and investigated this effect by submitting two identical applications one with a Swedish-sounding name and the other with a Middle Eastern-sounding name to positions in twelve different occupations. In total, 1,552 applications were sent, and the findings showed that applicants with Swedish-sounding names received callbacks 50% more often than those with Middle Eastern names. Numerous studies suggest that an applicant's name creates an initial impression that may lead to biased decisions. (Karlsson et al, 2007.)

The research emphasizes that acknowledging unconscious biases can be unsettling, but it highlights the need to address these biases to improve fairness in hiring. The researchers suggested an action plan to counteract bias, which included methods like avoiding "gut-feel" judgments during hiring and increasing awareness of biases. They also suggested techniques like promoting positive role models and diversity training to help mitigate implicit biases. (Beattie et al, 2012.)

## 4 How Can HRM Enhance Labor Migration?

### 4.1 Strategies for Promoting Inclusiveness in Recruitment

Encouraging diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace fosters a lot of advantages. One key benefit is the increased potential for creativity and innovation as individuals with varied skills, educational backgrounds, and perspectives come together to generate ideas and solutions. The impact of diversity in the workplace is evident: diverse management teams drive higher revenue, boards with greater gender diversity perform better over time, and job seekers increasingly prioritize workplaces with inclusive environments. (Kavitha, J et al. 2022, pp.1186-1187.)

Beyond creativity, diversity and inclusion enhance staff engagement, strengthen the organization's reputation, and reduce employee turnover, all of these aspects support better decision-making. Equity, in particular, cultivates a sense of accomplishment among employees and helps attract top talent. When employers treat employees equitably, they boost motivation and job satisfaction, encouraging greater commitment to organizational success. (Kavitha, J et al. 2022, pp.1186-1187.)

In a study made by the University of Tennessee (UTC) to improve racial and ethnic diversity within its Master of Science in Nursing Nurse Anaesthesia Program gives a good analysis of how diversity can be emphasized within recruitment and admissions. UTC implemented a three-part recruitment model that focused on educating nursing students of color about the CRNA (Certified Registered Nurse Anaesthetist) pathway targeted outreach and fostering an inclusive campus climate. Outreach efforts included attending conferences for nurses of color, partnerships with diverse nursing organizations, and holding information sessions at community colleges and hospitals with diverse staff. (Kilburn et al. 2019.)

This study was coordinated through the RRC recruitment and Retention Coordinator, and the study reached over 13,000 students and professionals. The admission processes were also reviewed and adjusted to increase fairness and transparency. The results showed that there was a significant increase in applications as well as admissions of candidates of color. Applications from candidates of color rose from 14.4% (2015-2017) to 27% (2018-2020) and admissions of color rose from 6% to 24%. This recruitment strategy led to a sustained increase in racial and ethnic diversity among applicants and admitted students. (Kilburn et al. 2019.) Enhancing diversity by actively showcasing the diverse composition of an organization and demonstrating a genuine commitment to diversity is widely recognized as a critical strategy for fostering an inclusive and diverse workplace as well as attracting diverse talent.

Diversity training is seen as an effective approach for companies to enhance inclusivity and mitigate biased behaviors. Diversity training programs come in various formats, but they all share a common goal: to reduce biased attitudes and behaviors within organizations. These programs aim to minimize the impact of bias during daily interactions, whether it is with customers, colleagues, or in decision-making around hiring and promotions. The best diversity programs focus on anti-bias training that raises awareness, emphasizes the lasting impact of bias, and plants seeds for continued growth. This training equips participants with practical skills to recognize and manage their biases, fostering behavior change over time. (Carter et al. 2020, pp. 59-65.)

Companies that actively commit to recognizing and celebrating diversity are viewed as more trustworthy by employees, also many studies suggest that reducing bias and increasing diversity can enhance profitability, strengthen the company's reputation, and mitigate potential liabilities (Carter et al.). Business leaders have a crucial role in questioning and addressing unconscious biases within their organizations to help employees and leaders recognize and mitigate unconscious biases. HR professionals can implement different strategies that include Awareness training, Confrontation, labeling biases, open discussion, and reorganizing structures and systems. (Oberai et al. 2018, pp.14-16.) Figure 1 demonstrates different strategies for addressing and mitigating biases based on the reviewed literature.

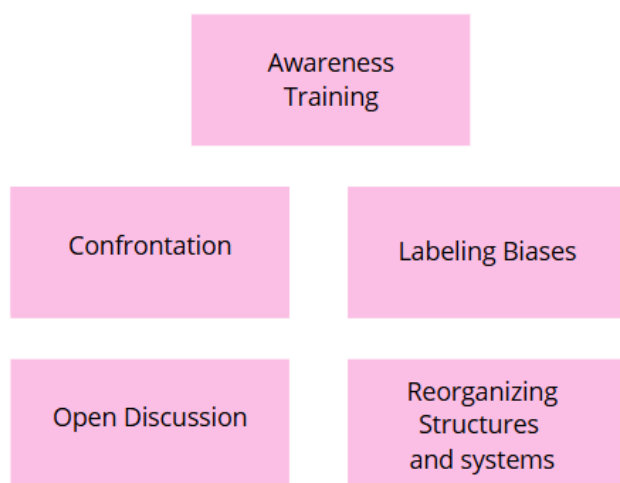


Figure 1 Strategies to mitigate unconscious biases in recruitment

**Awareness training** is the first step in addressing unconscious biases. Training can help individuals to recognize their own biases and become more self-aware. **Confrontation** is the step when individuals become aware of their own biases, they should take action to confront them. **Labeling**

**Biases** is based on patterns observed within the organization, HR leaders can identify recurring categories of biases that negatively impact organizational dynamics. By labeling these biases, employees and leaders become more mindful of how biases affect hiring, promotions, compensation, and workplace culture. **Open discussions** refer to when people share their personal experiences related to unconscious bias and the strategies used to address them foster an open environment for learning. **Reorganizing Structures and Systems** HR professionals, along with senior leaders, can revise systems and structures in areas such as recruitment, training, evaluation, retention, and interviewing. Implementing consistent and equitable processes helps minimize bias and establishes standardized practices across the organization. (Oberai et al. 2018, pp. 14-16.)

One suggestion to reduce discrimination in hiring is to enhance the use of AI Artificial Intelligence. The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into HRM is redefining talent acquisition, and revolutionizing recruitment strategies (Jha et al. 2024, pp.8859-8860). Advocates for enhancing AI argue that human decision-making is inherently flawed and prone to discrimination. Researchers suggest that personnel selection should be based solely on candidates' skills, merit, and performance. AI, unlike humans, is blind to factors such as gender, ethnicity, age, and background, which makes it less biased than a human. (Seppälä et al. 2024, pp.1-3.)

AI in recruitment offers both opportunities and risks. While it has potential to mitigate human biases, enhance diversity, it also raises concerns about algorithmic bias and privacy concerns (Hunkenschroer et al., 2022 pp. 994-995). Privacy concerns are very apparent in AI use, regulations like the GDPR mandate informed consent for data collection, but applicants often lack the power to opt out without being disadvantaged by doing so (Sánchez-Monedero et al. 2020, p. 464). Centralized AI decision-making can also be prone to homogeneity, as algorithms might reinforce specific profiles or traits, which could lead to diverse perspectives being limited perspectives (Vasconcelos et al. 2018 pp. 324-325).

Anonymous job applications have been a topic of conversation in Finland after the Campaign that Diaconia University of Applied Sciences made with famous Finnish entrepreneurs (Kauppalehti 2019). European countries have recently investigated the impact of anonymous job applications on callback rates for minority applicants. The studies showed that anonymous job applications can enhance interview chances for disadvantaged groups. Also, the anonymous applications disrupted recruiters' tendency to favor candidates with similar characteristics to themselves, which is a bias known as "homophily". However, some findings showed that anonymity may also prevent

employers from favoring minority applicants when credentials are otherwise comparable. (Krause et al. 2012.)

From a policy perspective, there is a compelling argument in favor of anonymous applications, as it ensures that applicants are evaluated purely based on their qualifications. Anonymous applications can also address the diversity-validity dilemma on hiring decisions, by reducing the impact of irrelevant factors such as gender or ethnicity. However, in practice, other factors such as applicants' educational background and work experience may inadvertently reveal information about the applicants' gender or ethnicity. It is also important to recognize that discrimination can occur during the interview period. (Åslund et al, 2012, pp. 99-101.) Figure 2 below showcases different strategies that help promote inclusiveness in the recruitment processes based on the reviewed studies and literature.

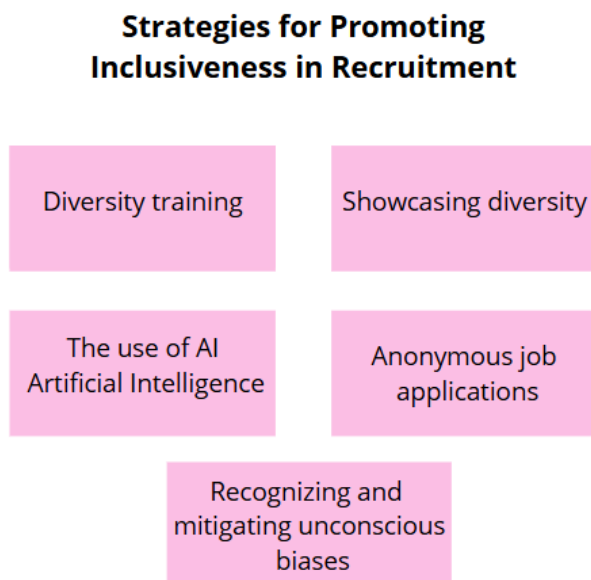


Figure 2 Strategies for Promoting Inclusiveness in Recruitment

## 4.2 Strategies for Enhancing Labor Migration within Organizations

One potential area for improvement regarding labor migration is the harmonization of labor market tests (LMTs) across the EU. While LMTs are used by all member countries to manage labor migration, each country applies them differently. These tests typically involve requirements like mandatory advertising periods as well as criteria for candidate selection and rejection. Harmonizing basic aspects of LMTs like advertising standards and job description requirements could make these tests less taxing for employers while still preserving their function as safeguards for labor markets.

(OECD and EU 2016, pp.133-135.) A harmonized approach could bring better predictability to recruitment procedures for both employers and workers alike. This approach would also make cross-border hiring more straightforward, which could mean greater mobility within the EU.

Skilled selective migration policies have become increasingly prevalent among developed countries, focusing on attracting workers with qualifications that align with labor market demands. These policies aim to address skill shortages, enhance economic competitiveness, and improve the overall quality of a workplace. Skill-selective policies have shown moderate success in increasing the average skill level of migrants. However, their direct impact is limited to those admitted under employment-based arrangements. The labor market still needs comprehensive strategies that address both immediate and labor market needs and broader integration challenges. This means that it is important to highlight supporting measures that include credential recognition and student retention, to maximize their effectiveness. (Facchini et al. 2014.)

Countries that aim to attract skilled workers utilize different policy approaches, which are broadly categorized into Demand-driven (immigrant-driven) and Supply-driven (employer-driven systems). Demand-driven systems refer to frameworks where immigrants are selected based on specific desirable attributes rather than requiring a pre-existing job offer. A prominent method in this category is points-based assessment, which evaluates candidates against criteria such as education, work experience, language and occupation. The idea is to attract individuals who meet the country's labor market needs rather than filling a job vacancy. Supply-driven systems refer to migrants who need a confirmed job offer from a company in the destination country before they can apply for a work visa or work permit. These types of systems refer to filling gaps in skill shortages. (Chaloff et al 2009, pp. 38-42.)

The rising adoption of skill-selective policies by high-income countries highlights the importance of attracting global talent to drive economic growth and innovation. When a company thinks about attracting talent from overseas they have to consider different strategies. These strategies could be engaging in global talent sourcing by partnering up with different universities to attract international students. Supporting educational institutions and fostering their linkages with firms can enhance regional innovation ecosystems and supply highly skilled labor to firms. (Facchini et al. 2014). Partnerships between companies and universities play a crucial role in driving innovation within a company. These collaborations have historically been essential to corporate research and development, contributing to foundational knowledge for future solutions, addressing immediate,

incremental challenges, and cultivating a continuous flow of fresh talent. (Frølund et al. 2018, p. 71.)

Companies hiring global talent need to listen to the needs of migrant employees and offer them a supportive working and living environment. By doing so companies can foster a win-win scenario. This means creating an engaged, stable, and diverse workforce while strengthening the company's competitive edge. Providing health insurance, mental health resources, and wellness programs to address the challenges of relocating and adapting to a new culture is also important in ensuring the well-being of migrant workers. (World Economic Forum 2022.)

Managing migration is a complex challenge. To effectively leverage the potential of migrant workers and gain a competitive edge in the global talent market, companies could prioritize different strategies that include recognizing the interdependence between business and governments in the recruitment of migrant workers, building internal expertise to effectively and sustainably manage migrant employees and lastly anticipating and adapting to global market shifts driven by Industry 4.0 advancements. (World Economic Forum 2022.)

When a company thinks of attracting foreign talent, it is essential to understand the organization's work culture. Fostering a welcoming workplace is a critical factor when attracting talent. Cross-cultural training for both existing and new employees is crucial in building inclusivity and ensuring a harmonious integration of diverse perspectives. Cross-cultural training programs are structured initiatives to prepare individuals for working in diverse cultural environments or with colleagues from various cultural backgrounds. (Ptak et al. 1995, pp. 430-432.) Diversity and cross-cultural training is important for both employers and both immigrant and native-born employees to promote cultural awareness and to create a more inclusive workplace (Lai et al. 2017 pp. 256-257).

Social Learning Theory (SLT) provides a valuable theoretical foundation for understanding the effectiveness of cross-cultural training. On the self-dimension level, cross-cultural training has been shown to enhance employees' confidence and their ability to operate effectively in unfamiliar cultural settings. The relationship dimension showcases how cross-cultural training improves relational skills by teaching employees how to interact with individuals from other cultures effectively. On the perception dimension level, cross-cultural training helps employees to understand how individuals from other cultures perceive the world. The SLT dimensions explain how cross-cultural training affects employees' personal-, relationship, and perception levels. (Black et al. 1990, pp. 122-124.)

When a company aims to attract global talent, it must consider both the external image it projects and the internal atmosphere it fosters. For migrants evaluating potential employers, the organizational culture plays a key role in their decision-making process. Organizational culture can be understood on two levels, as proposed by Schein (1992). The first is the visible level, which includes visible elements such as the dress code, office design, layout, and leadership styles. It also encompasses the work environment, how employees interact, and the decision-making processes within the organization. The second, deeper level of culture is less observable, consisting of expressed values, underlying assumptions, and core beliefs. Expressed values are the consciously held principles that are actively promoted and followed within the organization, guiding behavior and decision-making. (Warrick, 2017, pp. 398-399.)

Sol a company specializing in cleaning and laundry services, demonstrates a clear emphasis on cultural diversity and inclusivity through its online presence. One notable visible artifact is the display of multicultural staff photographs prominently featured across its website. Additionally, Sol has incorporated a multicultural calendar on its platform, which highlights significant holidays and observances from various cultures. This calendar serves as an artifact that reflects the company's expressed values, showcasing its commitment to inclusivity and cultural recognition. By acknowledging diverse cultural and religious events, Sol fosters a welcoming and inclusive environment, which not only resonates with its diverse clientele but also enhances its appeal to prospective employees from varied backgrounds. (Sol 2024.)

Figure 3 below gathered various strategies introduced in chapter three, that are designed to assist Human Resource Management (HRM) in fostering labor migration within organizations.

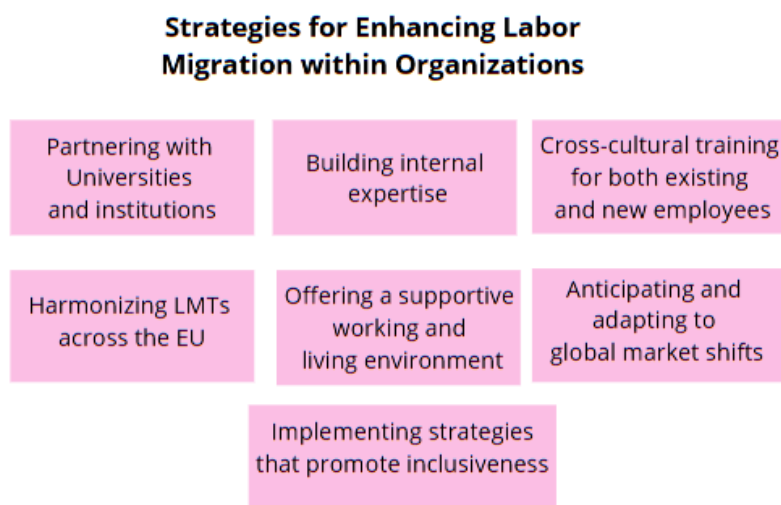


Figure 3 Strategies for Enhancing Labor Migration within Organizations

## 5 Conclusions

This thesis aimed to address the question: How can Finnish companies enhance labor migration? To provide a comprehensive understanding, this thesis examines migration holistically, explores migration theories, and analyses migration trends both globally and within Finland. Because this thesis answers the question from an HRM perspective, this thesis provides an overall idea of HRM practices and different strategies implemented to enhance migration and inclusiveness.

Different theories on migration were introduced. These theories were, the neoclassical economic theory of migration, which is the most well-known theory on migration. The neoclassical economic theory of migration has two approaches that are the micro-and macroeconomic approach. The push and pull theory explains the reasons for migration within the country they emigrate from and the country they migrate to. Sen's 1988 study on freedom of choice, introduces how people's capabilities determine if they want to migrate. These theories together provide a comprehensive understanding of migration and help to understand the reasons behind migration.

Labor migration plays a crucial role in today's globalized world, significantly shaping workplace diversity. In countries such as Finland, labor migration is expected to become vital for future economic growth given the country's demographic structure. This underscores the importance of addressing and understanding this topic.

To answer the main question "How can companies enhance labor migration?" it's crucial to explore the connection between HR practices and the applicants. Enhancing labor migration requires a closer look at the recruitment practices used to attract and hire these migrants. By understanding and improving these HR practices, companies can better facilitate the migration process and attract a diverse talent pool.

This thesis discusses the different practices of HRM and HR and their pivotal role in identifying talent through recruitment processes and applications. HR professionals play a unique role in supporting day-to-day operations as well as driving strategic initiatives. Bennington 2007 stated that HR practitioners are often responsible for management-level ethics awareness programs. This thesis provides a clear understanding that HRM has a pivotal role in recruiting migrants as well as creating an inclusive workplace where foreign talents want to work.

This thesis explored different studies that indicate that HR recruitment is biased. Discrimination in the labor market has been widely acknowledged as a serious issue by both researchers and policymakers. Equal opportunity is one of the main focus areas of HRM today but studies still show

bias in the recruitment processes. This thesis explored studies made in Finland, Sweden, Germany, the UK, and the United States. The studies represented in this thesis highlighted biases in the recruitment of foreign talents and migrants.

These biases were often tied to factors such as applicants' names, educational backgrounds, language proficiency, and concerns about their potential integration into existing team dynamics. This thesis examined various strategies that organizations can adopt to address and mitigate these biases. To effectively tackle these challenges, HR professionals can implement strategies such as awareness training, confrontation, labeling biases, open discussion, and reorganizing structures and systems. These biases prove that the recruitment process needs to be assessed, and recruitment processes have to be adjusted to enhance labor migration.

To enhance inclusiveness within a company various strategies can be employed, including diversity training, showcasing diversity, the use of AI in recruitment processes, anonymous job applications, and recognizing and mitigating biases.

This thesis introduces different strategies for enhancing labor migration within organizations. These strategies include partnering with universities and institutions, building internal expertise, cross-cultural training for employers and both existing and new employees, offering a supportive working and living environment, anticipating and adapting to global market shifts, and implementing strategies that promote inclusiveness.

The findings and research on this topic justify the relevance of studying it. As mentioned in the introduction our demographic shifts present substantial challenges to our economy. These changes have led to a shrinking labor market alongside increasing demand for specific services due to an aging population. Labor migration has been in a key role in repairing the damage but the dependency ratio will continue to grow due to our demographic structure. This means that there will be fewer working-age individuals supporting non-working-age individuals which is very draining for our economy and society.

Labor migration is essential for economies such as Finland. This thesis emphasized the significance of this topic and underscored the importance of further research in the area. Future research questions could be for example:

- What are the most effective HRM practices for promoting cultural integration and workplace inclusivity for migrant workers?

- How can AI and data-driven tools improve the recruitment and onboarding processes for migrant employees?
- How can HRM address the challenges faced by migrant employees in navigating workplace dynamics?

By adopting a Human Resource Management (HRM) perspective, the thesis served as a guideline for fostering more inclusive HRM practices. This thesis could work as a guide for companies and management students.

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