



Vaasan yliopisto
UNIVERSITY OF VAASA

Nea Pronin

Beginning of a New Era: Remote Recruitment Takeover

How has the COVID-19 pandemic and changing work affected recruitment
process evolution?

School of Management
Master's thesis
Master's Degree Programme in
International Business

Vaasa 2022

UNIVERSITY OF VAASA**School of Management**

Author:	Nea Pronin		
Title of the thesis:	Beginning of a New Era: Remote Recruitment Takeover: How has the COVID-19 pandemic and changing work affected recruitment process evolvment?		
Degree:	Master of Science in Economics and Business Administration		
Discipline:	International Business		
Supervisor:	Susanna Kultalahti		
Year:	2022	Pages:	89

ABSTRACT:

Tutkimuksessa selvitetään, miten muuttuvan työn ja korona pandemian tuomat rajoitukset ovat vaikuttaneet rekrytointiprosesseihin viime vuosien aikana. Työssä keskustellaan perinteisestä rekrytoinnista, modernista rekrytoinnista sekä ammattilaisten käsityksistä siitä, minkälaista tulevaisuuden rekrytointiprosessit tulevat olevaan pandemian jälkeen.

Tämän tutkimuksen empiirinen osa toteutettiin kvalitatiivisella tutkimusmenetelmällä. Puolistrukturoituja haastatteluja suoritettiin yhteensä seitsemän rekrytoinnin ja henkilöstöjohtamisen ammattilaisten kanssa. Haastateltavilla on monien vuosien kokemus rekrytoinnista ennen pandemiaa sekä sen aikana. Haastateltavat työskentelevät kaikki eri yrityksissä ja yritykset toimivat kansainvälisillä markkinoilla.

Tutkimus paljastaa, että rekrytointiprosessit ovat muuttuneet merkittävästi viime vuosien aikana ja korona pandemia on muuttanut rekrytoinnin pelikenttää entisestään ja vauhdittanut digitalisaation tuomien muutoksien toimeenpanemista. Korona pandemian tuomien rajoitusten myötä on otettu käyttöön uusia rekrytoinnin työkaluja, jotka ovat mahdollistaneet etänä tapahtuvat rekrytointiprosessit. Nämä etärekrytoinnin työkalut ovat lisänneet prosessien tehokkuutta ja näiden työkalujen uskotaan pysyvän osana prosesseja myös korona pandemian jälkeen.

Tämä tutkimus kattaa kirjallisuuden kuilun tarjoamalla konkreettisia esimerkkejä rekrytointiprosessien muutoksista korona pandemian aikana sekä rekrytoinnin ammattilaisten uskomuksia tulevaisuuden rekrytointiprosesseista.

AVAINSANAT: Rekrytointi, rekrytointiprosessi, etärekrytointi, verkkorekrytointi, muuttuva työ, henkilöstöjohtaminen, COVID-19 pandemia

Contents

1	Introduction	6
1.1	Background of the study	6
1.2	Purpose and objectives	9
1.3	Thesis structure	11
2	Literature review	12
2.1	Human resource management	12
2.1.1	HR practices	13
2.1.2	Towards digitally oriented HRM	15
2.2	Recruitment	17
2.2.1	Recruitment process	19
2.2.2	Employee recruitment models	23
2.2.3	Recruitment process outsourcing	25
2.3	Modern recruitment	26
2.3.1	Online and e-recruitment	26
2.3.2	Attraction recruitment	28
2.3.3	Proactive recruitment	28
3	Methodology	31
3.1	Research approach and strategy	31
3.2	Research methodology	32
3.3	Research process	33
3.3.1	Development of interview questions	35
3.4	Data collection – interviews	36
3.4.1	Background of the interviewees	40
3.5	Analysis of the interviews	42
4	Results	44
4.1	Recruitment processes	44
4.2	Remote recruitment activities	49
4.3	Pros and cons	55

4.4	Future – post-pandemic ‘new normal’	58
4.5	Other challenges and opportunities	60
5	Conclusions	67
5.1	Findings	67
5.1.1	How has the utilization of remote recruitment channels changed during the COVID-19 pandemic?	67
5.1.2	How have the recruitment processes evolved during changing work and the COVID-19 pandemic?	69
5.1.3	What is the future of recruitment processes post-pandemic?	70
5.1.4	Theoretical and practical contribution	71
5.2	Reliability, validity, and limitations	74
5.3	Future research suggestions	76
	References	78
	Appendices	88
	Appendix 1. Interview questions	88

Figures

Figure 1:	Thesis structure	11
Figure 2:	HRM activities based on Ulrich (1997)	13
Figure 3:	Recruitment process (Breaugh and Starke, 2000; Breaugh, 2008)	20
Figure 4:	Picture imitated from Kekäle (2018)	29
Figure 5:	Research process	34

Tables

Table 1:	Interviewee’s backgrounds	37
Table 2:	Recruitment process configurations	46
Table 3:	Unsuccessful recruitments due to the COVID-19 pandemic	52
Table 4:	Remote recruitment process efficiency	55

Abbreviations

AVRV	Augmented reality and Virtual Reality
ASA	Attraction-Selection-Attrition
e-HRM	Electronic Human Resource Management
e-Recruitment	Electronic Recruitment
HR	Human Resource
HRD	Human Resource Development
HRM	Human Resource Management
HRO	Human Resource Outsourcing
HRP	Human Resource Professionals
IT	Information Technology
OR	Online Recruitment
PM	Personnel Management
P-O theory	Person-Organization theory
QDA	Qualitative Data Analysis
RPO	Recruitment Process Outsourcing
SNS	Social Networking Sites
VP	Vise President

1 Introduction

The first chapter provides background information on the topic and the study. It explains the research problem, aims of the research, and research questions. An explanation of the research structure follows at the end.

1.1 Background of the study

Globalization and digitalization have affected the operating environment and caused ever-changing circumstances. Changing work and industrial revolution 4.0 have influenced the development of new technologies created for humans to communicate with machines and machines to communicate with each other and organizations to achieve more complicated goals. Therefore, companies and employees have had to adapt to these changes and develop their processes. Nevertheless, the current and ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the development and implementation of these new tools and strategies and further changed the field of operations.

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) emerged at the end of 2019 in China, and its impacts have been affecting worldwide since. The World Health Organization (2020) stated in March 2020 that the COVID-19 pandemic had exceeded a global pandemic level. The pandemic of COVID-19 has forced employees and firms to adapt to new circumstances and working environments. The COVID-19 pandemic has been one of the worst crises in history and organizations are battling for their survival. Organizations have faced financial difficulties due to massive decreases in product demand, firm performance, and significant declines in investments. (Shen et al., 2020) This has led to a reduction in labor demand and caused cutbacks and layoffs. Moreover, organizations also faced persistent disruptions to their operations due to lockdown, supply chain issues, traveling challenges, and many other restrictions imposed by the governments. (Kumar et al., 2020) All this caused the worst global recession since 1930, when the economy got raddled (Fu & Shen, 2020).

HR leaders have been placed to a central role in enabling organizations to manage during a pandemic crisis. (Santana et al., 2017; Adikaram et al., 2021; Collings et al., 2021). HR leaders support their employees to cope with the changes. The COVID-19 pandemic has had considerable impacts on everyone, and HR has been under significant pressure to solve these issues for their employees. (Collings et al., 2021) Further, recruitment processes are essential for HR activities and linked with companies' performance. Nevertheless, regardless of the field or type of the organization, it is stated that the company's success and execution are tied to the kind of individuals it employs (Dineen & Soltis, 2011; Phillips & Gully, 2015). Therefore, understanding the recruitment processes is vital for companies' success, and it is critical to study the best approaches for it.

The COVID-19 pandemic has radically changed the way industries work, particularly in terms of hiring new candidates via virtual interviews (Kathiravan et al., 2021). Many recruitment processes have been forced to evolve and to be carried out entirely remotely. Some of the recruitment processes have also been delayed or interrupted.

Recruitment processes have undergone significant changes during past decades, and the development of new tools and the internet has simplified connecting people. Recruitment efforts have also evolved through technological advancements that provide the possibility for online recruitment. Many companies have been forced to change further and evolve their recruitment processes to fit better the pandemic's circumstances and restrictions.

Companies and organizations have been entitled to ensure their employees' health and safety during the COVID-19 pandemic, causing drastic changes in the work settings and work arrangements. Further, the crises have affected employees' and society's well-being through mental health issues due to social isolation, restrictions, and uncertainty about their health, jobs, and future. (Rudolph et al., 2020)

Reasons for choosing this topic are the current topicality on the COVID-19 pandemic's effects, changing work, and personal interests in recruitment processes. Employee recruitments and human capital are crucial for companies' success and linked with organizations' performance. Additionally, unsuccessful recruitments can be costly for companies through new recruitment processes, wasted employee training, and lay-off packages.

Nevertheless, the world is becoming more integrated each day, and people products and companies are moving across national borders in an unprecedented way. Global competition has become more intense and forces companies to adapt to changes constantly. (Douglas et al., 2001) Globalization, digitalization, the internet, and remote work have provided an exceptional opportunity for companies to expand their operations. Remote work and remote recruitment enable companies to expand the scope for employee candidates and recruit the most suitable talents regardless of national borders.

Moreover, the pandemic has forced people to adapt to new methods. Companies can utilize these new procedures and tools post-pandemic as well. Learning which evolved processes have been effective and should be included post-pandemic is beneficial for the companies. Further, incorporating the tools and techniques straight after the pandemic can be easier than introducing new ways later because people's natural reaction is to resist change (Michael, By & Burnes, 2013; Ford & Ford, 2010). Therefore, continuing learned processes is more effortless than later implementing new procedures. Studying recruitment processes changes during the pandemic is beneficial to assess different processes' effectiveness, efficiency, and success. Learning which elements have been valuable and worth keeping in the future can improve the processes in the future and cumulate into companies' improved performance.

The topic has a limited number of previous studies since the pandemic emerged less than two years ago and is still ongoing. Therefore, the evolution of recruitment processes is further developing. Previous studies might include the changes during the beginning

but not the entire evolvement of the time. Furthermore, digitalization and changing work has been studied in the past but has not been linked with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and its affects to accelerating the development of new tools and processes.

Previous studies directly linking changing work during the COVID-19 pandemic to recruitment process changes were not found. There are studies on crisis management in HR literature, but little is known about HRM during a pandemic such as COVID-19 and its effects on recruitment activities during changing work. Nonetheless, Adikaram et al. (2021) state in their study that HR professionals (HRP) are still struggling to manage and find ways to handle the many crises that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought about.

However, some studies regarding recruitments activities during the COVID-19 and making sense of the COVID-19 pandemic can be found. According to Skeens et al. (2022), social distancing and remote recruiting have increased Facebook's usage in recruitment processes during the COVID-19 pandemic. Zion et al. (2020) article aim to understand people's mindset on the COVID-19 pandemic. Their findings can be categorized into three approaches that can also be exploited in recruitment mindsets during the pandemic. The commonly experienced emotions were a catastrophe, manageable, or an opportunity. (Zion et al., 2022)

1.2 Purpose and objectives

This thesis aims to study the changes and evolvement in recruitment processes during the COVID-19 pandemic and changing work. The thesis will focus on the changes to previous recruitment processes, remote recruitment activities, and what is the new-normal post-pandemic in the recruitment path. The thesis discusses recruitment from the employers' and recruiters' points of view and not from job seekers. The paper includes qualitative research, interviewing Human Resources (HR) and recruitment professionals.

This thesis and its qualitative research aim to understand the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on HR activities and especially on the recruitment process activities. The aim is to understand the changes and evolution during the pandemic. The paper aims to comprehend the challenges and opportunities of recruitment processes, remote recruitment phenomena, and pros and cons. Additionally, the thesis seeks to gather information regarding recruitment processes efficiency and experts' viewing of the post-pandemic recruitment processes in the future.

The thesis includes both theoretical and empirical objectives. The theoretical part will consist of a literature review and provide a theoretical framework for the study. The theoretical part defines relevant terminology and discusses previous studies. The empirical part includes interviewees' personal experiences that identify the effect of the pandemic on recruitment processes through one-to-one semi-structured interviews.

The research topic is approached with sub-questions. The sub-questions support the aims of the study and its objectives. The sub-questions are also included in the interview questionnaire as central themes and will be answered in the conclusions.

1. How has the utilization of remote recruitment channels changed during the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. How have the recruitment processes evolved during changing work and the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. What is the future of recruitment processes post-pandemic?

The contribution of this study is to provide insight into how human resource management and recruitments processes have evolved during the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, the study aims to take a stand on recruitment process changes success during the pandemic and possibly recommend activities to exploit in the future post-pandemic recruitments.

1.3 Thesis structure

The thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter one focuses on the introduction of the topic, the background of the study, and research aims. Chapter two is a theoretical part of the thesis and consists of a literature review and provides a theoretical framework for the analysis.

The third chapter is the methodology and describes the research process and used methods. The results of the conducted study are discussed in the fourth chapter. Lastly, the fifth chapter concludes the study and discusses findings of the study. Last chapter will also include discussion on study's validity, reliability, limitations, and provides some suggestions for future research.

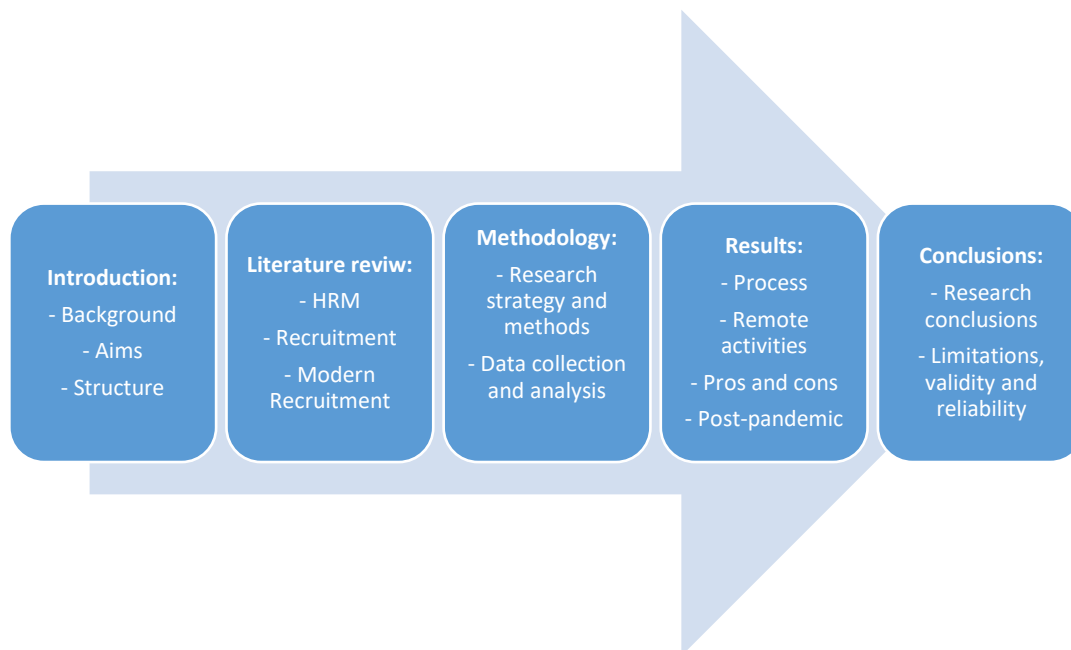


Figure 1: Thesis structure

2 Literature review

The literature review is the theoretical part of the thesis and will consist of three main chapters. The first part will discuss human resource management (HRM), changing work, and HR practices. The second part will discuss traditional recruitment processes and activities thoroughly. In the end, the third part will discuss modern recruitment activities and changes in recruitment activities.

2.1 Human resource management

Technological, economic, and geographic changes have been pressuring organizations in past decades to utilize more effective human resource management (Fombrun, et al., 1984). The goal of human resource management can be seen as that the company has the skills it needs at every moment in its service and, if necessary, is available on the labor market. HR can take care of these matters through employee recruitment, employee retention, and employee commitment.

In the human resource management literature, commitment is viewed as an employee's response to HR practices. (Kuvaas, 2008) Increased commitment among employees is positively related to their job performance and organizational behaviors (Flinchbaugh et al., 2020; Stanley and Meyer, 2016). Furthermore, previous studies indicate that engaged employees are more committed, motivated, and empowered to perform in their roles (Rich et al., 2010). Miles and Snow (1984) discussed decades ago how focusing on improved human resources management can contribute to restoring the competitive position of their companies while the global marketplace becomes increasingly challenging. Therefore, HR practice's role has been emphasized even further due to pandemics and changing work.

2.1.1 HR practices

Ulrich (1997) divides HR roles and activities into four categories: strategic partner, change agent, administrative expert, and employee champion. Ulrich describes strategic partners to help ensure the success of business strategies by aligning HR and business strategy with each other. Change agent refers to transformation and change activities and providing the needed capacity for the change to occur. As administrative experts, HR builds an efficient infrastructure, and as an employee champion, the goal is to increase employee commitment and capability through listening and responding to employees. (Ulrich, 1997) These elements are also present in recruitment processes.



Figure 2: HRM activities based on Ulrich (1997)

Pfeffer emerges in the field of human resource management as a researcher who has emphasized in his studies the importance of linking HRM to the company's success by putting the employees at the center. (Pfeffer, 1978; Pfeffer, 1999; Pfeffer, 2010) In their article, Pfeffer and Veiga (1999) presented, among other things, seven personnel practices that help a company to succeed. These include nurturing an employee's sense of security through job security, paying more attention to recruitment, increasing transparent communication, and reducing hierarchy. (Pfeffer and Veiga, 1999) Pfeffer can therefore be seen as a researcher who has brought personnel and HRM into the spotlight in companies' success.

HR activities can also be categorized further into different HR practices. Each researcher divides HR practices slightly differently. Pfeffer (1994) identified 16 practices which can enhance a firm's competitive advantage. Pfeffer (1998) further identified best practices in Human Resource Management. The seven dimensions are employment security, selectivity in recruiting, information sharing, participation and empowerment, training and skill development, incentives, high wages, and promotion.

Delaney and Huselid (1996) identified HR practices as recruitment and selection, training and development, participation and rewarding. Furthermore, Lee and Lee (2010) identified training and development, teamwork, performance appraisal, compensation and incentives, human resources planning and employment security, product quality and firm's flexibility. Nonetheless, Qureshi et al. (2010) categorize HRM practices into selection, training, job definition, performance appraisal, compensation, career planning, and employee participation. Later, Malik et al. (2019) discuss HRM practices as suitable leadership styles and management practices that create a culture of trust and empowerment within the workers.

Other mentioned HR practices are employee well-being, supervisor management, and HR budgeting and planning. Nonetheless, recruitment practices are commonly accepted as part of the HR practices entity by various research. According to Phillips & Gully (2015),

recruitments and enabling the workforce within the company are a fundamental part of HRM tasks.

2.1.2 Towards digitally oriented HRM

Changing work and digitalization can also be seen in HRM activities. Electronic human resource management (e-HRM), digital HRM, and integration between information technologies and HRM have developed significantly during the past decades. (Marler & Parry, 2016). Organizations aim to achieve administrative and strategic benefits of e-HRM activities by implementing HR strategies, policies, and practices with the support of IT applications (Bondarouk et al., 2017; Kucherov & Tsybova, 2021). Digital HRM starts when companies use digital technologies to support operational HR practices, especially in recruitment activities (Strohmeier, 2020).

According to Imbun (2009), workforce recruitment and employment under previously established personnel management (PM) has become irrelevant in today's globalized markets. Imbun (2009) describes the new paradigm to shift toward human resource development (HRD). Management places the human factor in organizations as an unavoidable responsibility for all administrative factor areas. Under this new paradigmatic understanding, the human organizational element becomes a dynamic and complex issue that requires new management practices. (Imbun, 2009)

Santana et al. (2017) discussed a conceptual framework with four complementary HRM bundles that can help companies overcome declining situations, such as changing work or pandemics. The mentioned approaches are flexibility-oriented, efficiency-oriented, niche-oriented, and maintenance-oriented. (Santana et al., 2017) HRM bundles can be based on different theories by different researchers. One way of dividing the HRM approaches during a crisis is soft, neutral, and hard HRM (Viljanen & Lahteenmaki, 2009). Soft HRM is based on human relations and emphasizes communication, motivation, and

leadership. On the contrary, hard HRM emphasized quantitative, calculative, and business-strategic aspects. (Storey, 2014)

Moreover, according to Backes-Gellner (2004), employee recruitment and employee commitment of high-skilled workers to the company have become the main challenges in the field of human resource management due to globalization, digitalization, and technological development. During the past two decades, there has been an increasing demand for a limited number of highly skilled and educated candidates (Verma & Ahmad, 2016). Therefore, changing work and globalization have also affected recruitment activities. The fierce competition for qualified and educated employees across borders has enhanced lately. Recruiting international students and employees can provide cultural and economic benefits for the organization and improve companies' performance. (Shneikat, 2021)

Thomas (2009) discussed five typical challenges nowadays in HR during tough economic times and changing work. Firstly, company growth both organically and through acquisitions has increased during recent years. This growth affects an organization's HR functions, which should also grow to be able to manage larger organizations. Secondly, when a company operates in a decentralized model in multiple countries, has country-based operations, and operates local processes, each unit has its own fully staffed HR functions. These HR functions in each country can deliver the basic operational requirements but at relatively high costs. Thirdly, the recruitments processes can become inefficient if a company has no technology solution for recruitment.

Moreover, the recruiter might rely on the recruiting manager's personal network, which can cause little direct external recruitment and a high cost per hire due to the reliance on recruitment agencies. Lastly, Thomas (2009) discusses the challenges of providing employees with personal development and learning opportunities. It is essential for organizations to have a centralized platform for managing and implementing learning in a changing environment.

Different solutions provided by Thomas (2009) to these presented challenges vary and are challenges that HR functions face now in changing work. One commonly mentioned solution is outsourcing activities, whether the outsourcing is for recruitment activities, training activities, or payroll activities. Further, creating HR functions tailored to the new, more extensive developed needs is also one solution. Thus, it can be expensive and time-consuming to develop. Outsourcing and recruitment process outsourcing (RPO) activities will further be discussed in the next chapter.

2.2 Recruitment

As stated earlier, employee recruitment is a fundamental part of HRM activities to enable the workforce within the company. Recruitment processes are often handled by HR teams or dedicated recruitments teams and personnel within HR. Regardless of the field or type of the organization, it is agreeable to state that an employer's success can be tied to the kind of individuals it employs (Dineen & Soltis, 2011; Phillips & Gully, 2015).

Recruitment refers to the process of attracting, screening, selecting, and hiring the best employee based on skill, experience, and organization fit. It requires a vast amount of time, and cost-effectiveness is essential for its success. Finding and attracting the right employee at the lowest cost possible contributes to an effective and efficient workforce and creates a solid competitive advantage for organizations. (Marchington et al., 2012)

According to Imbun (2009), recruitment is one of the most important objectives of any organization by providing a sufficient and reliable supply of skilled labor. Therefore, recruitment processes have a crucial role in companies' success, and the importance of recruitment activities should be acknowledged within companies. (Pfeffer and Veiga, 1999) Recruitment function occupies a vital role in the organization because companies are always looking to attract the most talented employees for a job that can generate a competitive advantage. (Boşcai, 2017; Constantin, 2012)

Employee recruitment can be defined as activities and functions that influence the number and types of applicants who apply for a position, stay interested in the job, and accept a job when offered. (Fisher et al., 1999; Breugh, 2008) Employee recruitment aims to fill job openings with individuals who provide the desired attributes (Breugh and Starke, 2000; Phillips and Gully, 2015; Acikgoz, 2019). According to Breugh and Starke (2000), the main goals of recruitment activities can further be described as bringing the job opening to the awareness of as many qualified applicants as possible and further convincing these potential applicants to apply.

Typically, a recruiter creates communicative content regarding open positions, such as preparing job postings, receiving job seekers' application documents, communicating with applicants, coordinating the recruitment process, managing potential partners for recruitment, evaluating applicants, and contributing to the selection process. However, it is expected that the final recruitment decision is by the recruiting supervisor or its manager. Other functions included in the recruitment process are developing the operations of the HR department, producing content for the company's career websites, building employee brand image, analyzing, and reporting the results of the recruitment process, and updating the instruction materials and other activities for applicants. (Boşcai 2017)

Recruitment activities and processes have evolved during the past decades due to technological advancements (Breugh, 2008; Ployhart and Moliterno, 2011; Pastor, 2012; Phillips & Gully, 2015; Boşcai, 2017; Brandãoa et al., 2019; Golovko and Schumann, 2019; Piveca and Mačekb, 2019; Lindsey et al., 2021;). According to Choudaha et al. (2018), successful recruitment practices have three main themes. First is the technology for cost-effectively expanding reach. Secondly, partnerships for creating pathways and visibility. And lastly, research to prioritize efforts and measure return on investment. These elements indicate that international recruitment practice is a dynamic process. (Choudaha et al., 2018)

Technology and different tools are getting more advanced. Institutions are using strategies and adopting techniques similar to commercial enterprises to their recruitment processes. These strategies include such events as attending virtual fairs, updating and translating websites, offering virtual tours, hosting webinars, and increasing the use of social media platforms. Such events have grown and become extremely important in recent years. (Choudaha et al., 2018) Next, the literature review will focus on a traditional recruitment process and later discuss more modern and changed recruitment processes.

2.2.1 Recruitment process

There is no consensus existing regarding the exact recruitment process path. Usually, the first step is the job analysis, which includes a detailed job description and a job specification. (Melanthiou et al., 2015). Recruitment processes can also typically start from the need. Need for new employees or more workforce (Phillips & Gully, 2015; Breaugh and Starke, 2000). An incentive for this need can contribute by numerous factors, such as job rotation and a need to fulfil an open position, the need for more employees due to increased workloads, summer employees and trainees, recruiting a new team, or retirements. These factors also affect the urgency of the recruitment process and the timeframe for the recruitment process. (Breaugh and Starke, 2000) Therefore, the processes often vary depending on the need, circumstances, and stimulant.

According to Breaugh and Starke (2000), the recruitment process can be divided into five stages. Firstly, the process begins by establishing the recruitment objectives and continues by developing the strategy for the recruitment process. The proceedings further continue with recruitment activities and interviewing the candidates. Lastly, the process ends by evaluating recruitment results and comparing outcomes with set objectives. (Breaugh and Starke, 2000) Figure 3 below illustrates the recruitment process path described by Breaugh and Starke (2000).



Figure 3: Recruitment process (Breugh and Starke, 2000; Breugh, 2008)

At the beginning of a recruitment process, the employer needs to determine the type of individuals to target in their recruitment. Well-defined job analysis and description play a fundamental role because they discourage unsuitable applicants and attract suitable candidates (Banfield et al., 2018). The employer must also decide the methods used to reach these targeted individuals, the communicated recruitment message, and the team handling and overseeing the recruitment process. (Breugh, 2013) Traditional channels and methods in recruitment include advertisements, referrals from colleagues, friends or such, employment agencies, internal job postings, walk-ins, campus visits, and job fairs (Zottoli & Wanous, 2000).

Breugh (2008) suggests that, before making decisions regarding recruitment methods, an organization should thoughtfully establish its **recruitment objectives**. Recruitment objectives include defining the type of individuals to target and what kind of knowledge, skillset, and abilities are essential. Additionally, the budget for the recruitment process, the number of positions, the number of employees, the targeted timeframe, and other possible objectives need to be established. (Breugh and Starke, 2000) Furthermore, in the beginning, the company decides whether to carry out the process within the company recruiters or if external help is needed. Additionally, the team determines whether the candidates are searched within the company or outside of the company. (Breugh, 2013)

After defining and establishing the recruitment objectives, the organization should **develop a strategy** to fulfil open positions. To maximize competitive advantage, a company

should choose the recruitment methods that produce the best pool of candidates efficiently and effectively (Kleiman, 2000). The strategy should include when the recruitment begins, the desired message to communicate to applicants, how to reach the targeted individuals, what recruitment sources and channels to utilize, who the used recruiters are, and other strategy-oriented questions. (Breugh, 2008)

Recruitment strategy includes deciding whether to recruit from internal or external labor markets. Internal labor markets develop long-term employment relationships and bind employees to the organization. Internal labor markets enable organizations to reduce costs, and internal employees get certain stability, which is not available to employees in the external labor market. External labor markets include all potential candidates regardless of the organization's boundaries (Schwan and Soeters, 1994).

After strategy development, the process continues with **recruitment activities**. Recruitment activities include posting the job openings, conducting recruitment interviews, executing chosen methods during the recruitments, and providing and negotiating the possible job offers. (Breugh, 2008; Wolfswinkel et al., 2010). Companies traditionally aim to attract applicants through newspapers, recruitment agencies, employee referrals, suppliers, customers, and university invitations. Nowadays, companies also have the possibility of online sources such as job boards, online recruitment sites, and SNSs that act as an alternative option (Gilmore & Williams, 2012).

Mentioned recruitment activities include interviewing job applicants and processing variables. The variables include applicant attention, message's credibility, applicants' personal interests, meeting the applicant expectations on applied position, applicant self-insights, and applicant decision-making process. (Breugh, 2008) Once the deadline for applications is over, the recruitment team evaluates each candidate and creates a list of those that hold the necessary credentials and are potential candidates (Melanthiou et al., 2015). According to Bohlander and Snell (2007), evaluation and selection are part of

the process where the number of applicants is reduced and choosing from among those individuals who have the relevant qualifications.

After shortlisting applicants, the recruiter contacts candidates. There can be an initial telephone interview or a sent questionnaire to candidates for further information. Typically, after the first interview session, the provided information by the applicant is verified through background checks and by contacting previous employers and reference lists. Further, a shortlist of the applicants with the best attributes is developed, and they are called for a second round, typically face-to-face interview. (Palazzo & Kleiner, 2002)

Usually, throughout the second-round interviews, standard pre-developed questions are asked for every candidate for comparison purposes. During this stage, the candidates have the chance to be informed more thoroughly of expected output and demands. Additionally, a real case scenario simulation and other assessments are often used to test the applicants to identify their skills and character. Furthermore, brief presentations on applied positions, employees, the company, and managers are used to demonstrate the job and its requirements better. (Palazzo & Kleiner, 2002) The initial employment interview aims to evaluate applicants to determine their qualifications for the position and attract applicants to the firm (Rynes, 1988).

Lastly, final assessments are performed at the end of the recruitment process, and the hiring decision is made. The best applicant is carefully chosen based on the candidate's presented abilities, skills, character, and performance during the interviews and recruitment process. The contract is created, and a job offer is given to the chosen candidate. (Palazzo & Kleiner, 2002) After the decision, the next step is persuading the candidate to accept a job offer. The candidate can either take or reject the offer. If a candidate declines the offer, they will be excluded from the candidate pool, and the next best applicant is contacted. (Acikgoz, 2019) Once an applicant has accepted the job offer, not chosen applicant will be informed. (Palazzo & Kleiner, 2002) The final stage in Brough's and Strike's

(2000) recruitment process path is to evaluate the recruitment process results and compare the outcomes to the original objectives.

2.2.2 Employee recruitment models

Employee recruitment literature has a few models on the employee recruitments process, which describe factors linked to fulfilling job openings with individuals who provide the desired attributes.

Schneider's (1987) attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) model is one general framework utilized in recruitment processes. The approach integrates individual and organizational practices and explains the reciprocal influences between individuals and organizations through the attraction-selection-attrition frame. According to the ASA framework, people's attraction toward organizations differs based on evaluating the compatibility between candidates' characteristics and the characteristics of an organization. The selection stage chooses only certain types of people with selected competencies admitted into the organization through formal and informal selection procedures. Lastly, the selected individuals may leave the organization in the attrition phase if they personally experience not fitting into the chosen organization. (Schneider, 1987)

Another known recruitment model is a person-organization fit -theory. The first thought of the approach to individual-organizational compatibility can be by Argyriks (1958), who argues that there is a particular atmosphere in each company, and its compatibility should fit with the recruited employees. According to Kristof (1996), the person-organization theory depends on demands and supplies. A complementary fit is formed when the organization's needs fit with the person's demands and are aligned with the organization's supplies. Based on the relationship description, P-O fit can be defined as the compatibility between people and organizations that occur when at least the other entity provides what the different party needs or both parties share similar fundamental characteristics, or both options take place simultaneously (Kristof, 1996).

In the recruitment processes models, the P-O theory has been increasingly important. In their research, Judge and Bretz (1992) show that job seekers emphasize the suitability of their values to the values of the recruiting firm when choosing a job. Jobseekers were thus seen as most likely to choose a company whose employer aligned with them and whose values were similar to the jobseeker's own. In the P-O fit theory, the set of values and their compatibility is vital since the values affect the formation of the company culture (Schein, 1996). Judge and Bretz (1992) also had another study regarding the P-O fit's effects on the employee's performance in the company. The study shows a clear link between suitability and success in terms of both external and internal indicators of success. (Judge and Bretz, 1992)

A few models of the employee recruitment process in the literature describe factors associated with an increased likelihood of reaching the goal of filling job openings with individuals who possess the desired attributes. One example of the recruitment process is provided in chapter 2.2.1 *Recruitment process* by Breaugh (2008). However, according to Acikgoz (2019), one common limitation of these models is the limited discussion of job search behaviors by potential applicants. Although, models that attempt to illustrate the recruitment process must consider activities that job seekers perform during the search for an employment opportunity (Acikgoz, 2019).

Nonetheless, Ployhart and Moliterno (2011) provide a sufficient description of their processes at multiple levels leading to the emergence of human capital. However, their model starts with a group of employees and therefore does not explain how these employees are acquired in the first place. Thus, the models can work as a guide during the recruitment processes but do not cover the entire recruitment process life cycle from the beginning.

2.2.3 Recruitment process outsourcing

According to Franceschini et al. (2003), outsourcing can be defined as transferring certain business functions and their responsibility to an external operator. Human resource outsourcing (HRO) is a strategic management tool that delegates the operational burden and tasks commonly performed internally to a third party (Sparrow & Braun, 2007). One of the most common outsourcing activities in HR is recruitment process outsourcing (RPO).

RPO is a business strategy that many multinational companies have included in their processes to gain a competitive advantage. By outsourcing the recruitment tasks or staffing functions to a third party, the company can focus on other tasks that cannot delegate outside the company. RPO can include several activities that contribute to helping in any way to hire the new employee, such as conducting candidate searches, performing pre-interviewing screening and selection, and scheduling interviews. (Berson et al., 2020) RPO organization integrate technology and develop and implement new recruitment processes that allow centralized control of hiring and the method of hire. As a result, the organization can anticipate reducing recruitment through agencies to 25 per cent of all recruitment (Thomas, 2009).

The distinction is often made between the types of recruitment methods based on the targeted results and activities. Some recruitment practices aim to attract individuals who are currently looking for jobs, known as active job seekers. Other techniques aim to target individuals who are currently employed by other organizations, not interested in applying for jobs but would potentially be open to job opportunities if offered, known as passive job seekers. (Gorn, 2021; Acikgoz, 2019) The active job seekers can be attracted with more passive methods of recruiting, such as posting information online about the job openings. However, passive job seekers require more targeting and active approaches. Companies can outsource the activities and utilize external headhunters, consult or recruitments firms in such circumstances. (Acikgoz, 2019)

Using headhunters is one option for outsourcing some parts of the recruitment process. Headhunters are often utilized while recruiting high-skilled workers with specific knowledge and skills. (Macdonald, 1986; Gorn, 2021) Headhunters can provide more suitable candidates for the firm because they often induce proactive activities. Headhunters expand the pool of potential candidates to a more significant number of high-skilled workers by contacting the candidates directly and attracting the passive job seekers. Therefore, headhunters create opportunities for new matches without active search from employed workers. (Gorn, 2021) Furthermore, headhunters can better focus on screening the candidates and delimiting the pool of potential candidates. These two features result in better matching between high-skilled workers and firms. (Gorn, 2021) Headhunters can also be executive recruiters or executive search consultants (Macdonald, 1986).

2.3 Modern recruitment

As discussed in earlier chapters, HRM practices and recruitment processes have undergone significant changes during the past decades. Developed modern operations in e-recruitment and e-HRM practices have created new tools that are utilized in recruitment processes. Innovating has become essential to identify, select, and retain the best talents worldwide during an economic context of a pandemic or intense competitiveness (Sahay, 2014). The need for effective and efficient recruiting technologies is emphasized in social businesses, where it is more challenging to select and retain the right employees (Allal-Chérif et al., 2021). This section will discuss some modern recruitment tools and their contribution to changing work.

2.3.1 Online and e-recruitment

Among other HRM practices, recruitment has changed dramatically under the impact of

digitalization (Kucherov & Tsybova, 2021). Online recruitment (OR) is also known as e-recruitment, web-based recruiting, online recruiting, web recruiting, remote recruitment, recruiting on the internet, electronic resume, internet recruiting, and other similar titles. (Wolfswinkel et al., 2010) According to Allden and Harris (2013), e-recruitment describes the process companies follow to discover and recruit talented individuals from the internet. Brandão et al. (2019) define online recruitment as a recruitment process conducted via the internet, email, or any other type of advanced communication system online. The definitions may vary slightly, but the main understanding is similar.

Recently online recruitment activities can include other terms such as social media recruiting or social recruiting, which also falls under the scope of e-recruitment. More and more organizations are using their social media pages for recruitment purposes (Boşcai, 2017). Finding a talented candidate that fits the job has become more complex. E-recruitment represents a solution for companies trying to find the ideal candidate to generate a competitive advantage. Additionally, e-Recruitments help the candidates to find suitable employers. (Boşcai, 2017)

Online recruitment (OR) is an essential source of recruitment activities in our ever-changing context, where new technologies experience rapid development. The goal of the e-recruitment platforms is to identify and attract potential employees effortlessly and, in the case of long distances, cost-efficiently. (Rosoiu & Popescu, 2016). Online recruitment can also be a more effective way to recruit due to saving costs by reducing revenue by using online recruitment and saving used time allocated to the recruitment process. (Bresfelean et al., 2010) Furthermore, previous studies show that online recruitment is more effective for companies already known among people (Galanaki, 2002).

2.3.2 Attraction recruitment

Digital technologies also make it possible to reach out to individuals who are passive job seekers but are open to proposals to change jobs (Allal-Chérif et al., 2021). Social networking sites (SNSs), such as LinkedIn and Facebook, have become a significant part of the employee-recruitment process and attraction process. SNSs Web sites are nowadays considered the most popular Web sites on the Internet and offer extensive networking possibilities and job seekers opportunities to connect (Nikolaou, 2014). Many companies use SNSs to attract potential employees, achieve their recruitment goals, and reach as many individuals as possible. (Melanthiou et al., 2015; Golovko and Schuman, 2019) With suitable preparation and the proper procedures, SNSs can enable companies to run their recruitment strategies at a lower cost and effectively (Doherty, 2010). Companies can publish their job opening and promote their employer brand on their corporate web-sites (Cober et al., 2004).

SNSs also useful for targeting passive jobseekers given the extensive number of individual profiles they contain. For example, LinkedIn is a social networking site specifically designed for professional networking, and thus it is largely used by recruiters to locate and approach those individuals who are potentially good candidates for the job openings they are seeking to fill. (Golovko and Schumann, 2019) Furthermore, the increased competition for talents in the labor market has forced organizations to improve their image through persuasion and active promotion of the organizational reputation. (Pastor, 2012). Therefore, attraction recruitment is a cost-efficient way for companies to respond to the increased competition.

2.3.3 Proactive recruitment

Proactive recruitment activities often utilize SNSs platforms. Proactive strategic recruitment can improve strategic academic recruitments and, consequently, outcomes of ac-

ademic work and company performance (Kekäle, 2018). Traditionally, recruitment processes are reactive. The proactive model is not synonymous with headhunting, but there can be reactive and proactive headhunting. However, headhunters and dedicated recruitment organizations utilize proactive recruitment activities.

In traditional recruitment, active candidates apply, and recruiters remain passive observers who only make comparisons of the candidates. In the proactive model, proactive networking of researchers, joint visits, cooperation, collaboration, and the use of tenure track positions are crucial to the proactive model. In the proactive recruitment model, the research group can expand the number of potential candidates by proactively networking even before encountering the need for recruiting. (Kekäle, 2018).

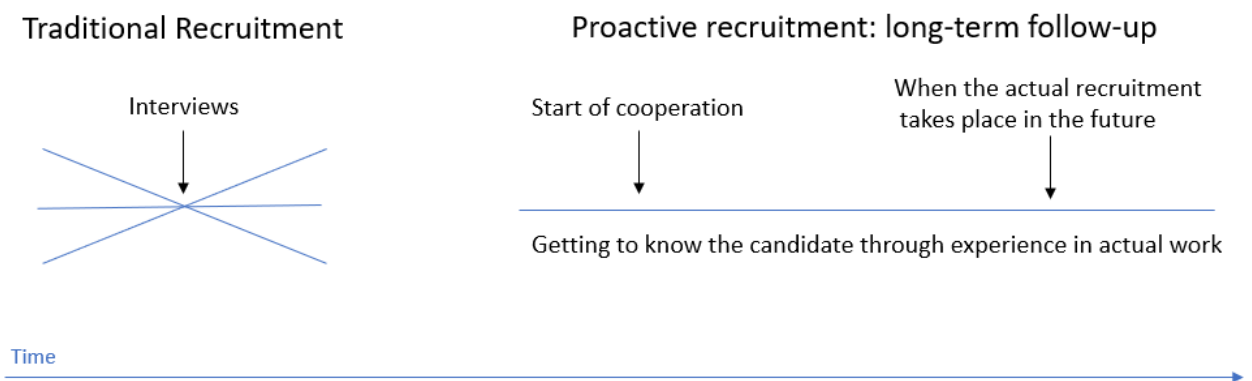


Figure 4: Picture imitated from Kekäle (2018)

Figure 4 above illustrates how Kekäle (2018) describes the difference between traditional and proactive recruitment. The most significant difference is getting to know the candidate through experience in actual work for a more extended period and before the urge for recruitment. Whereas in traditional recruitment, the getting to know candidates start in the interviews after the need for recruitment has emerged.

The theory has covered HR practices, recruitment activities, traditional recruitment processes, and modern recruitment activities. Additionally, the theory has discussed changing work in HR and recruitment processes, which are later compared to research findings

and the effects that the COVID-19 pandemic has had. The next chapter will explain the research methodology and how the study was conducted.

3 Methodology

The following chapter describes the research methodology used in the study. The chapter is divided into five subtitles and will discuss the research approach and strategy, used method, research process, data collection, and analysis of the interviews.

3.1 Research approach and strategy

The thesis collects its data by interviewing recruitment and HR professionals through their experiences in the recruitment process evolution during the COVID-19 pandemic. Before further discussing the collected data, the methodology used in the study is reviewed. The study method examines the suitability of the data collection and analysis techniques. The methodology chapter shows why the selected methods were used in this study and discuss their feasibility.

The choice of research method has significant importance for the research outcome. The decision must be unambiguous so that the results can be clearly interpreted and thus reliable. This study seeks to use qualitative research to obtain more and deeper information about the recruitment process evolution during the COVID-19 pandemic. Qualitative research aims to find new, often fascinating, phenomena based on the personal experiences of the interviewees.

This study explores the phenomenon through semi-structured, highly interactive, and conversational interviews. Through this, the informant can understand the aims of the research and the provided questions. At the same time, the informants can ask clarifying questions. The interviewer can also ask follow-up questions to gain as much important information about the phenomenon as possible. Additionally, such semi-structured interviews enable expanding the topic area further through open questions and changing up the order of the questions.

3.2 Research methodology

The two most common research methods are qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative research collects data from informants' personal experiences, for example, through interviews. The quantitative research method is often used for measurable data and includes prior data, such as questionnaires. Commonly quantitative research measures data numerically, whereas qualitative research describes the data by using words. (Kumar, 2011)

Qualitative research aims to understand an unknown phenomenon or a phenomenon to which it is presumably impossible to obtain one clear answer. In qualitative research, the idea of research is not to focus on detailed questions. Instead, it is to ask open and broad questions and then further follow-up questions if needed to obtain an in-depth understanding. In cases of precise and clear studies, quantitative research methodology is suitable. (Kananen, 2014: 16.) Therefore, qualitative research methodology is more suitable for analyzing broader topics such as the phenomena of recruitment process evolution during the COVID-19 pandemic and changing work.

Qualitative research is typical of using human know-how in gathering information. In this research, qualitative research is in the form of semi-structured interviews. Specific questions and themes can contribute to a framework for the interview, but the discussion progresses into a broader context than the interviewer's original interview questions. The interviews aim to explore a more significant phenomenon than just changes in recruitment practices during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Trockim and Donnelly (2008), the less the phenomenon has been studied, the more it is natural to use a qualitative research method. Therefore, this also supports the use of qualitative research in this study.

The interviewees are carefully chosen in qualitative research, whereas the respondents are often unknown in quantitative research. The qualitative method ensures the interviewees have desired experience and knowledge to support the study aims. Therefore, the informants have the necessary background and information to act as interviewees for this study. The chosen interviewees have many years of experience within HR or recruitment tasks and experience before and during the COVID-19 pandemic recruitments. Consequently, the qualitative research method allows choosing suitable informants with deep knowledge of the field and topic.

Further, the author has limited knowledge of recruitment processes and conducting a study as a researcher. Therefore, having a qualitative research method is a more suitable option. The questionnaire is not limited only to the author's chosen detailed questions, and there is a possibility for clarifying questions. A structured and delimited questionnaire can be challenging to create with limited knowledge and might not include all the necessary factors.

Although the result cannot be generalized to everyone and every company due to the small sample size, it is possible to state that the result is relevant and reliable information for a particular group. However, the small sample size fulfils the requirement of a qualitative criterion of qualitative research; the sample group is of the highest quality possible under the prevailing conditions.

3.3 Research process

The initial idea for the thesis topic was established in December 2020. The original topic idea was *How to manage resistance to change during the COVID-19 pandemic* because the author had written a bachelor's thesis on change resistance. However, the topic shifted towards *the evolvement of recruitment processes during the COVID-19 pandemic* in March 2021. The author was applying for internships and noticed significant changes in the recruitment processes.

The first meeting with the thesis advisor and the research schedule was decided in November 2021. According to the plan, the thesis process started in December 2021 by reading other studies and articles and searching for possible interviewees. The writing started at the beginning of January 2022, and the interviews were conducted in February 2022.

It was clear from the beginning that the study would be conducted as qualitative research since it focuses on understanding the phenomena of recruitment processes evolution during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the quantitative research method would not have provided the desired outcome or linked the cause and consequence reasoning behind the phenomena. Additionally, understanding the process and its evolution in-depth requires dialogue and the follow-up questions that arise during the discussion and the clarifications provided by both the interviewer and the interviewee. The research process is illustrated in the chart below, starting by creating the interview questions.

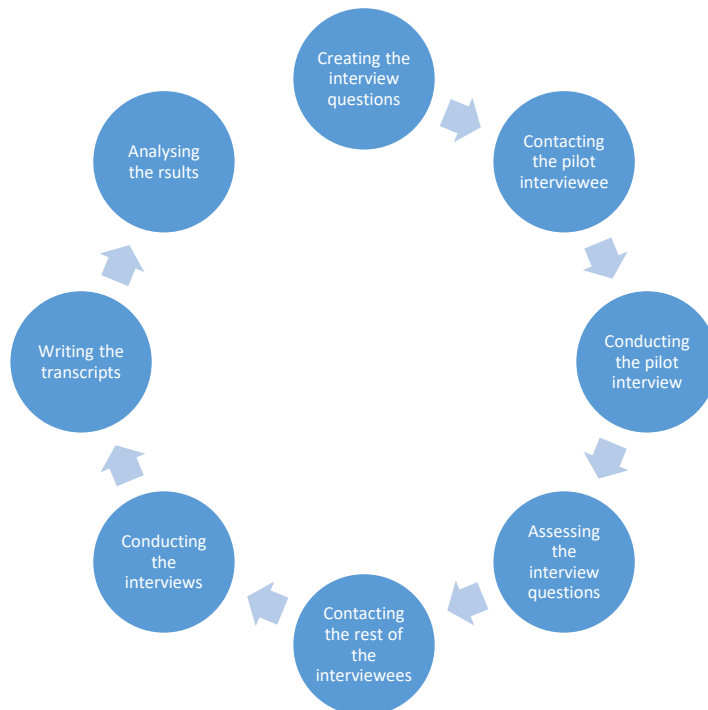


Figure 5: Research process

The development of the interview questions started after writing most of the literature review and studying the relevant topics, previous research, and existing models. Interview questions are created based on the studied literature and aims of the study, and the possible interviewees were preliminarily selected. Before contacting the potential interviewees, the pilot interview was conducted. The next chapter focuses more on the research process and the data collection through interviews.

3.3.1 Development of interview questions

As stated earlier, the development of interview questions began after completing most of the literature review. The created interview questions are chosen to be open and help shift toward further conversation. Hence, to contribute to developing an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. The interview questionnaire consisted of twenty-two (22) questions in total. The questionnaire included six (6) main broader questions asked from everyone and then five to fifteen smaller sub-questions.

The number of sub-questions is dependent on the informant's answers and whether they brought up some topics themselves. For example, the question "What your recruitment process is like?" includes a variety of factors. If the informant did not bring up external partners such as headhunters, they were asked about them during the discussion around the topic. Therefore, some interviewees included more sub-questions than others, but each interview aimed to consist of the same topics. Additionally, the interviews had refining questions on both sides so that the interviewee understood the questions better and the interviewer understood the answers correctly.

The questions can be divided into three main categories. The first two main questions focus on the interviewee's current position, their links to recruitment activities, and the company's current recruitment process. Secondly, the questions focus on remote recruitment activities and the changes that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. Lastly,

the questions focus on expectations about future and post-pandemic recruitment processes and other possible opportunities and obstacles that the recruitment processes have faced during the pandemic.

3.4 Data collection – interviews

The research aims to understand the evolution of recruitment processes during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the interviewees are HR specialists, recruitment specialists, or recruiting supervisors. The criterion for selected interviewees was that they had been working part of recruitment processes during the COVID-19 pandemic, had prior experience of recruitment processes before the pandemic, and that their daily activities related to recruitment tasks at some level. The interviewees include both HR and recruitment specialists and recruiting supervisors to understand the evolution of the recruitment processes thoroughly and from multiple perspectives. The recruiting supervisors are selected because they are included in the recruitment processes and decision-making.

The chosen interviewees have five to twenty-five years of experience in recruitment activities. The interviewees were selected to have variable backgrounds to provide different perspectives and knowledge. All the interviewees are employed in different companies within multiple various fields. Further, all the companies operate internationally and are medium-sized or large companies. The interviewees' names nor companies are not disclosed in this thesis. However, the company fields, employee titles, and interviewee genders are shown in the table below.

Table 1: Interviewee's backgrounds

Interviewees	Title	International	Field / industry	Sex
Person A	Senior HR Business Partner	Yes	Manufacturing	Female
Person B	Enabling employee and customer happiness	Yes	Financial and insurance activities	Male
Person C	VP Human Resources	Yes	Manufacturing	Female
Person D	VP, People Strategy and Transformation	Yes	Manufacturing	Female
Person E	Head of Human Resources	Yes	Manufacturing	Female
Person F	Talent Acquisition Specialist	Yes	Computer programming, consultancy, and related activities	Female
Person G	Human Resources director	Yes	Wholesale and retail trade	Female

The interviewees were contacted through social media channels, such as LinkedIn and What's App. All the contacted interviewees were happy to be part of the study. In the beginning, the number of interviewees was planned to be around 6-10 people. After conducting the literature review, it was decided to start with eight (8) informants and then assess whether the study requires more informants or if the answers get saturated and no more informants are needed. One interview was unsuccessful and therefore excluded from the study, and seven (7) informants were chosen to be a suitable number of interviews.

The first interviewee was contacted in January 2021 for a pilot interview. The interview questions were modified based on the pilot interview, and literature review topics were delimited further. The pilot interview's role is to increase reliability and validity and rehearse the interview and the interview questions. The pilot interview was longer than the other interviews, up to 60 minutes. After the pilot interview, the interviewee provided critical feedback on the topic. The pilot interview is included in the study as any

other interview. The conducted pilot interview, its critical analysis, and received feedback increase the validity of every interview afterwards and thus also the reliability of all possible research results obtained from them.

Before the pilot interview, the theoretical part had decided on outlines, excluding headhunting and the outsourcing recruitment process. However, headhunting was brought up a couple of times during the pilot interview and linked to changing work and the COVID-19 pandemic. The pilot interviewee also disclosed RPO's extensiveness in recruitment processes. Therefore, the outline of the study was assessed, and headhunting and outsourcing were included in the theoretical part and the interview sub-questions.

Nevertheless, after the pilot interview, the questionnaire structure was also modified. The last question was altered, and the order of the questions was changed to flow more naturally. The sub-questions were also categorized in a more structured way under each topic. The pilot interviewee stated that the provided sub-questions beforehand helped them. Therefore, some of the sub-questions were sent to the interviewees with the interview questions before the interviews.

After conducting the pilot interview at the end of January 2021, the rest of the interviewees were approached. The interview times were scheduled and conducted throughout February 2021. At the beginning of each interview, the interviewees were reminded of the study's aims. Every discussion also started by asking whether they had time to go through the questions and did the questions raise any ambiguity.

Each interview lasted between 30 to 45 minutes, except the pilot interview was up to 60 minutes. One of the interviews was held face-to-face, but the other six were through Microsoft Teams, ZOOM meetings, or Google Meetings. All the interviews are recorded with a computer or voice recorder on the phone. The interview discussions were in Finnish, in everyone's native language, to avoid misunderstandings and language barriers. The quotations in the analysis are translated to be as accurate as possible.

After each interview, the transcripts were written immediately. The interviewees provided an opportunity to come back with more follow-up questions if anything arose while writing the transcripts. One interviewee was contacted afterwards for clarification for one answer. The answer is included at the end of the transcript. Additionally, one interviewee reached out after the interview to add a point to one topic. The mentioned point is added to the end of the transcript as well.

The transcripts were written within 24 hours of the interview. Each transcript writing provided an opportunity to learn as an interviewer and take notes for other follow-up questions based on other interviewees' answers. Each transcript was written word by word, even though it is acceptable in semi-structured interviews to leave something out. Writing the transcripts word by word also allows direct quotations in the analysis and makes sure that none of the answers or effects is left out.

The transcripts were between ten to fourteen (10-14) pages, 88 pages in total. An average length is 13 pages per interview. The length of transcripts is aligned with the length of the interviews. The discussions closer to 30 minutes were a bit shorter on the paper, whereas the interviews up to 45 minutes were 14 pages. However, all the interviews discussed the same topics and were evenly distributed despite the interviews' durations and the length of transcripts fluctuating.

As mentioned earlier, one of the interviews was excluded from the study. The interviewee had not had the time to familiarize themselves with the interview questions, was not allowed to answer all the questions, and the recording was unsuccessful. Additionally, at this point, the provided answers were starting to get saturated and did not bring new information. Therefore, the interview was removed and not held again. Nevertheless, the interviewee was not replaced with another interviewee. It was decided that seven (7) interviewees were a sufficient sample size to explore this phenomenon, and the answers started to repeat themselves.

3.4.1 Background of the interviewees

Table 1 from earlier illustrates well the background of the interviewees. This sub-chapter elaborates on the interviewees' titles and explains their relation and involvement in recruitment processes.

Person A

"I am a **Senior HR Business Partner**, and we work closely with the business unit and with the team supervisors. When recruitment needs arise, we usually have HR Services involved, someone like me, and someone from recruitment teams. I am more involved in high-level recruitment processes for key positions than customer service surface."

Person B

"I work as an **Enabling employee and customer happiness** and supervise a team of 10 to 15 advisors. Of course, when new employees are needed to join our team, I am always strongly involved in the recruiting process. The process always includes someone from the HR department who takes care of the HR admin work. I mainly participate in going through the applications, interviewing the candidates, and the decision-making process."

Person C

"I work in our HR unit as a **Vice President of Human Resources**. Recruitment is one part of my main job. I handle all the senior level recruitments, such as recruiting members to the management team. I also participate in all kinds of other recruitments downward from the recruitment of the management teams."

Person D

“I am the **Chief Human Resources Officer** of this business unit. I also work as **Vice President in People Strategy and Transformation**, so I am responsible for our strategy and change programs. Since I am the Chief Human Resources Officer, recruitment is, of course, a big part of my job. I am involved mainly in the management team and management positions recruitments and then in the recruitment of other key personnel. I don't necessarily participate in our other recruitments, for example, out factory employees, by interviewing them or participating in the decision-making process, but their recruitment planning of what, where, and how much we will recruit is at my desk.”

Person E

“I work as the **Head of Human Resources**, and I am responsible for our company's human resources throughout. It covers a wide range of activities and the entire life cycle of the employment relationship and all the different stages in it and of course recruitment is also one big part of my job.”

Person F

“I work as a **Talent Acquisition Specialist**. I have a pretty versatile job description, but my main job is to recruit. I would say that 90% of my time goes to recruitment activities, but we have a lot of different employment benefits, and I take care of various other HR tasks that aren't officially included in my role. I have more than 200 interviews per year, and we hired last year 110 new people. At least every month and almost every week, someone new to starting, and I have some job interviews nearly every day.”

Person G

“I am a **Human Resources Director** at our company. Recruitment is regular on an irregular basis, which means that it depends entirely on the person's position to

be recruited and whether I am involved. In other words, my team has a recruitment manager who mainly handles our recruitment processes. Still, suppose we are recruiting a sales manager or senior staff member or another high level of recruitment. In that case, I am involved in that final selection phase or even since the very beginning.”

3.5 Analysis of the interviews

After conducting all the interviews, the research continued by studying different analysis techniques since there are no right or wrong answers in the qualitative research approach. I familiarized myself with some literature and the Gioia method and grounded theory, commonly used in analyzing qualitative research. In this theory’s analysis approach, no previous hypothesis is being tested. Instead, the data is being studied, and then the idea emerges based on that data. Gioia’s method typically focuses on one case over time and interviews people and their interpretations of a specific event.

Gioia’s method can be compared to telling a story about how the informants perceive the situation. Typically, in Gioia’s method, the theory is presented as a process that unfolds over time. Additionally, Gioia’s approach relies on an interesting phenomenon and not a theory (Langley and Abdallah, 2015). Therefore, studying and including the Gioia method and ground theory can be applied to this research.

After studying the different approaches to analysis, a tool, **NVivo 20**, was implemented for the examination. NVivo 20 is a qualitative data analysis (QDA) computer software package. NVivo assists qualitative researchers in organizing, analyzing, and finding insights in unstructured or qualitative data like interviews, where an in-depth analysis of small or large volumes of data is required.

The first round of analysis started after each interview during the writing of each transcript. Parts in the transcript were highlighted, some keywords were bolded, and notes

were written on the paper marginals. At this point, all the exciting topics that seemed to be significant were marked. After writing each transcript, they were reread immediately to check the spelling and develop an overall understanding of the topics.

The second round of analysis started after conducting all the interviews at the beginning of March. The analysis then continued by rereading each interview from the beginning and color-coding some more extensive topics. The transcripts were uploaded to the NVivo 20 tool, and Gioia's method's first step, coding, started. The first step includes finding the key concepts from the data and understanding lower-level meanings.

The data analysis then continued by dividing the topic into five more extensive categories. My initial categories were the recruitment process, remote recruitment activities, pros and cons, post-pandemic new normal, and other concerns and mentions. Analysis proceeded by rereading the transcripts and copying the findings under each extensive category. After categorizing the data according to Gioia's method into more abstract categories in NVivo 20 tool, the analysis continued by standard content analysis, by looking for similarities, exceptions, and other new information.

To conclude the data analysis process, the data analysis takes inspiration from Gioia's method and grounded theory. Additionally, it exploits the NVivo 20 software package, which creates a framework for the standard content analysis method. The next chapter discusses the results of the interviews.

4 Results

This chapter will describe the results and findings from the interviews. As the data analysis described, the topics are divided into five categories. The first part of the analysis focuses on the recruitment processes. The second part discusses remote recruitment activities and changes in recruitment processes. The third chapter discusses the pros and cons of the function's evolved activities. And lastly, the chapter discusses the post-pandemic future beliefs and other mentioned challenges or opportunities.

4.1 Recruitment processes

The recruitment processes and their paths are relatively similar in every informant's company. The operations follow the same steps and have mainly similar people as part of them. The recruitment process typically starts in each company of the need and proceeds with a meeting that discusses the job description, desired attributes, and overall recruitment strategy. The needs vary and can be categorized into anticipated and ad hoc conditions. The anticipated recruitments are often planned in the year's budget. They include all known needs, such as the need for summer employees, the knowledge that someone is retiring next year, or the need to recruit a new team to a particular division. The mentioned ad hoc needs can be unexpected resignments, having to lay off someone, strategic changes, and unpredictable workloads.

“We always budget for the whole upcoming year in the autumn budget planning, including all the recruitments. Therefore, if the implemented recruitments are within its budget and plan framework, they don't need additional approval since the board has already approved them once in the budget. Of course, if there are any unexpected needs or ad hoc recruitments, the process is a bit different, and we need to apply for a permit from higher levels. However, it usually is not a problem as long as the need is justified and there is a reason why it wasn't included initially in the budget.” – C

Interviewee C's response was quite typical compared to other interviewees. However, interviewee G had a slightly different approach to the recruitment activities after discovering the need. Interviewee G also discussed planned needs and surprising needs. However, interviewee G emphasized that they try to improve their processes continuously and are not afraid of making changes. According to interviewee G, recruitment processes are an excellent opportunity for evolving the procedures of a company.

*“Our recruitment process can start at many stimuli. We may have a change in our strategy or previous needs, we might need a new person for a completely new role, and there is no previous employee to replace. Then, there may be retirements or resignations. In these situations, we take a step back and always think about whether we fill the same position with precisely similar employees or whether to **make changes**... And quite often, it is worthwhile to make changes” ... “Every recruitment is a chance of renewal, and we always want to take things forward.” – G*

Interviewee G says that the attitudes and willingness for change activities have increased during the past couple of years and thus are not directly tied to the COVID-19 pandemic but more to changing work. Although, the pandemic can affect the mindsets indirectly due to ongoing circumstances and other changes it brings.

While discussing the recruitment processes, the interviewees were asked about their recruitment configurations. The question included both the decision-makers and possible external help utilized in recruitment processes. Table 2 below shows the employees' answers and persons involved in their recruitment processes.

Table 2: Recruitment process configurations

Interviewee	Recruitment process configurations and decision-makers
A	HR professional, recruitment support from recruitment team, and recruiting supervisor. The management team level, additionally the HR director or the board, and a high-level consultant.
B	Recruiting supervisor, HR department's recruitment support, and a third person: colleague or another supervisor. Towards the end, at least one above manager. External consultants in challenging recruitment.
C	Recruiting supervisor and one of us HR department specialists. In top-level recruitments additionally, headhunters or other consultants. In the end, one above manager is included.
D	Always at least HR, recruiting supervisor, and supervisor's supervisor. Some processes include teammates, and in our matrix organization, recruitments have the matrix manager.
E	Head of HR, supervisor, and supervisor's supervisor. On the production side, the production manager and a team leader might take care of the interviews together without any HR support. Headhunters are included in demanding recruitments.
F	Talent acquisition specialist and recruiting supervisor. Sometimes supervisor's supervisor and in the role of a team leader, unit leader, or supervisor, the team members can be included— no external help .
G	HR director or recruitment manager and the recruiting supervisor. The supervisor's supervisor makes the last decision. High-level recruitments include external help, headhunter, or consultants.

Based on the answers in Table two, the most common combination is to have an HR or recruitment specialist, a recruiting supervisor, and one above manager at least some point in the recruitment process. External help, such as consultants and headhunters, are often utilized in challenging or demanding recruitments. External service is also included in a hurry to help at some point. However, interviewee F was the only one who said they do not use external support. Nonetheless, interviewee F's recruitment practices also differ from other mentioned activities.

“My recruitment is quite ‘untypical,’ but it is typical in IT. It is highly proactive and attraction-focused and through our networks.” ... “Probably 80% of our recruitments are attraction-focused recruitments, which means that it is not posting a job advertisement and hoping that there will be suitable candidates and the best ten will be interviewed, and the best one will be chosen. Unfortunately, no. We have had specific jobs or roles open for the last four years.” -F

Interviewee F describes this mode of operation as typical within the IT field. Since almost all of their recruitments are attraction-focused and aligned with headhunters’ job descriptions, they do not use any external help in recruitment processes. Before the company had a dedicated talent acquisition specialist, they utilized headhunters to help recruit supervisors in some recruitments. Interviewee F also discussed other “modern recruitment activities” that are common within the IT field and becoming more common in other sectors.

“Modern recruitment also includes marketing and understanding how sponsorships and target groups are built. We are often targeting passive jobseekers with our posts that when they scroll their Facebook, LinkedIn, or Twitter and see our post, they pay attention and get interested.” – F

Interviewees A and G also utilize LinkedIn and other networks in their recruitment processes. According to interviewee G, there is a shortage of suitable applicants, and their competition in that market is intense. Nevertheless, rarely are these desired experts looking for a new job, and therefore, they must be attracted or searched through LinkedIn or other networks to stimulate interest.

Besides interviewee F, all interviewees discussed utilizing headhunters or other external consultants in their recruitment processes, thus mainly in managerial position recruitments. Interviewee B and interviewee E mentioned having long-term partnerships with

certain consults. Interviewee B also noted that they increased the usage of external consults to support the recruitment processes in the spring of 2021, when the recruitment market accelerated after the silence of the pandemic. However, they have been utilized seasonally in times of urgency. Interviewee E also discussed the usage of external consults increasing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“I would say that it [the usage of headhunters] has increased slightly maybe. Is it due to the COVID-19 pandemic? I’m not sure. It might be. Perhaps partly, it does play a role if you start thinking about the root causes that make some positions hard to fill? And there, the COVID-19 might be affecting why it’s so challenging to find certain employees. For example, IT personnel demand has increased during the pandemic.” – E

Interviewees A and D believe that headhunters' usage has not decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic but are unsure whether the pandemic itself has increased the use either. Interviewee C and interviewee G say that the usage of external help has stayed the same. Interviewee A also discusses how exploiting external resources is getting more common, especially in IT positions.

“We almost always use an external consultant or headhunter who conducts research through LinkedIn and other sources and seeks to find suitable candidates for the IT position recruitment. That's really common nowadays. Previously, headhunters were sometimes used only in management recruits, and nowadays, it is getting lower and lower all the time. Now, there are often external consults involved in expert task recruitments, such as in the IT department.” – A

Interviewee D also agrees that the usage of headhunters has increased during the past couple of years and even during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the interviewee would not connect directly to the change caused by the COVID-19 pandemic but more with changing work.

*“At least COVID-19 has not reduced the use of headhunters. Perhaps even more easily, we seize the headhunters if we find it challenging to find suitable candidates for specific roles. But **the pandemic itself has had little effect.**” – D*

Aborted recruitments

The interviewees were also asked whether they had had to abort or interrupt recruitments processes due to the COVID-19 pandemic. None of the interviewees had aborted any already started recruitment processes. However, interviewee D disclosed that at the very beginning of the pandemic, they had delayed a few recruitments hoping that the COVID-19 situation might fade away by the end of summer 2020, but then continued the processes nearly when they realized the situation. Interviewee E also mentioned that they had not aborted any started recruitments. However, they added an extra clause to their summer employees' contracts.

“Our summer employees' contracts have included an extra clause. If our business opportunities deteriorate significantly due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we may put the employment on hold or terminate the summer workers' contracts early. Fortunately, we did not have to do that with anyone. But it would have been quite absurd to have had to lay off our permanent staff, but we would still have summer employees.” – E

4.2 Remote recruitment activities

Remote recruitment activities have been common in every interviewee's recruitment processes during the past years and during the COVID-19 pandemic recruitments. Interviewees A, B, C, D, and G had remote recruitment activities before the COVID-19 pandemic due to changing work. However, interviewee B states that “but definitely not on this scale as now.” Before, some positions commonly used video applications, phone

calls, and Teams meetings before the pandemic. Interviewee D describe the changes in their recruitment process as follows:

*“We have used in our production’s recruitment processes videos in prior. Meaning we don’t have real-time video interviews but videotaped questions in advance, and the interviewees videotaped the answers. It has been in use for several years now. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have started using live video interviews in all recruitment processes, including managerial positions. Before the corona, it would have seemed **entirely out of the question** to hire a business leader before meeting them, but now, they have gone just fine.” – D*

Interviewee C says they have not created any new recruitment tools or activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but they have improved and broadened existing tools and increased their usage. Interviewee G states that their processes have not changed drastically, and the majority of the remote recruitment activities have already been used before the pandemic. However, interviewee G says that the most significant difference has been within the interviewees.

“Perhaps the biggest change has been that the recruited employees weren't before used to remote recruitments” ... “They were clearly unfamiliar with the situation, their connections might not work, or they were not used to using cameras.” – G

Interviewees E and F had not had remote recruitment processes before the COVID-19 pandemic. According to interviewee E, the COVID-19 pandemic changed the field drastically by introducing remote interviews, although submitted video applications had been in use for multiple years. Interviewee F discussed the other affected factors in their usage for remote recruitment activities, although the pandemic has also had a significant effect.

“Many other things have also changed during the pandemic. For example, we have grown from 80 employees to 450 employees, and we have opened three new offices around Finland. We now have a lot of employees in different locations. Before the pandemic, most of the recruitments were to the Helsinki area, and then people wanted to come to the office for interviews. We had very few Teams interviews then. However, now most of the recruitments are for elsewhere, and probably 90% of the recruitments have been handled entirely remotely.” – F

Interviewee G discussed some newly developed operation modes and re-allocated resources during the COVID-19 pandemic to support remote recruitment processes. Interviewee G explains organizing online seminars included in remote recruitment processes to connect better with the candidates, build a deeper connection with the company and answer questions regarding the position.

*“We’ve also had kind of **webinars**, where our current employees who do the same job have been talking about these positions to applicants. We’ve included a link and a date in our job posting. The applicants can attend to this and **ask questions**. It was trendy, and I noticed that many people liked it, and our competitors copied that as well.” – G*

Interviewees D and E also mention some reallocated resources towards marketing in recruitment processes. Interviewee D discusses how they have increased the number of social media campaigns to support their recruitment activities compared to before the pandemic and remote recruitment activities. Interviewee E likewise mentioned how their dedicated marketing teams created video material for recruitment purposes during the COVID-19 pandemic to support the remote recruitment activities.

After discussing remote recruitment processes with the informants, they were asked whether there have been more unsuccessful recruitments during the COVID-19 pandemic, either due to remote activities or other challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic has contributed in. Table 3 below shows the interviewees' responses.

Table 3: Unsuccessful recruitments due to the COVID-19 pandemic

Interviewee	Has there been more unsuccessful recruitments during COVID-19 pandemic? Due to remote recruitments or other changes.
A	"I haven't experienced this at all. I believe that a good understanding of the interviewee can be formed through remote channels. It's also a part of the professionalism of the recruiting manager and HR."
B	"I don't know if it is directly linked to the remote recruitment model, but in fact, we have had even fewer unsuccessful recruitments. "
C	"Yes, but I don't want to get into it more."
D	"I would say no . If there have been unsuccessful recruitments, they are more related to the hurry, which isn't directly due to the pandemic."
E	"Not completely unsuccessful recruitments, but with some summer employees, we have noticed afterward that they were not exactly what we had thought based on the interview."
F	"We have had very few unsuccessful recruitments. Maybe out of 250 new employees we have had three unsuccessful ones."
G	"None more than before" ... "During the past two years, there have been two probation time layoffs."

Only one informant said that there had been more unsuccessful recruitments due to the changes and circumstances but did not want to elaborate on that much. The chosen candidates did not match as employees to what they had indicated to be based on the video interviews. Interviewee E also mentioned that some of the summer employees did not wholly match the image they had provided in video interviews. However, summer employee recruitments can often be completed with fewer resources due to their short period. The other six informants did agree that there have not been more or have been

even fewer unsuccessful recruitments. Some of the interviewees also pondered and discussed why there might have been more unsuccessful recruitments during the COVID-19 pandemic.

*“On the other hand, one reason why the number of unsuccessful recruitments might have occurred is ‘**The Great Resignation.**’ There has been discussion regarding so-called ‘work-changing weeks’ and a lot of movement between jobs. So, there have also been those people who have **changed jobs for the wrong reasons.** Employees might be bored at home and hope that a new job will bring change and excitement, and at the end of the day, they might not have thought it through.” – F*

Interviewee E also believes that employees have changed jobs for the wrong reasons during the pandemic. They have had multiple previous employees contacting them again after leaving, whether they can come back to work there. Often, reasons for leaving were to explore other opportunities now that the changing jobs have become more common and more accessible due to teleworking and remote work possibilities. The content of the work may not have played as much of a role as the desire for variation.

Interviewee D discussed the effects of hurry in the recruitment processes and its contribution to unsuccessful recruitments, which is not inevitable due to the COVID-19 pandemic but might affect the overall recruitment circumstances. Nevertheless, interviewee D believes there has been accuracy development during the COVID-19 pandemic’s recruitments and while recruiting remotely.

*“Maybe we have been even more careful now [in remote recruitments] since we realize we are recruiting through a video and **paying more attention.** We may be even more cautious in checking the references, and we might have **several discussions** over the video throughout the process.” – D*

The scope of recruitments processes

The interviewees were also asked whether the remote recruitment processes and remote work possibilities have increased the scope of recruitment processes since the employee might not have to work in a specific location. All the interviewees mentioned that their employees worked remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. Most interviewees said they would not want to work in a company where they must tell the recruited candidates that they cannot work remotely. Interviewee F elaborates on the remote work changes affecting the scope of recruitments as follows:

*“We have recruited over ten employees during the pandemic that we would not have drafted or who would not have wanted to be recruited before remote work culture. Even though it was possible to work remotely before the pandemic, everyone came to the office daily. It was infrequent to work remotely. It led to thinking that **we didn’t want to hire employees in cities where we hadn’t offices**. We didn’t want to have a lonely employee alone in a town that did not have offices nearby.” ...*

*“Now that all the meeting invitations also have a remote link as an option and Slack has been introduced as a remote communication channel, **it has made it possible** to recruit employees to cities with no offices.” – F*

Interviewees A, D, and G mentioned that it had been now more acceptable to work remotely. The interviewees discussed how their recruitment announcement already includes a mentioning that employees can also work remotely. Of course, depending on the position. Informants have also noticed that the overall mindset has shifted and is now more open-minded because it is possible to work across the country, which was not the case before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Interviewees mentioned that they had not yet recruited employees from other countries to work remotely in Finland. However, interviewee A discussed that in central Europe,

where the countries are closer to each other and commuting in some cases is more effortless, some recruitments had been completed by hiring an employee to work remotely from one country to another. Furthermore, remote recruitment activities have been utilized in international recruitment processes, and employees have been recruited remotely from one country to move to another, where the new job takes place.

4.3 Pros and cons

Remote recruitment processes have provided many pros and cons for the companies. Recruitment process efficiency was mentioned multiple times as one significant benefit of the process evolution during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, not every informant agreed it had been more efficient. Table 4 below illustrates interviewees' thoughts regarding the recruitment process efficiency changes during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 4: Remote recruitment process efficiency

Interview	Recruitment process efficiency during the COVID-19 pandemic?
Person A	"Pros are indeed that this is very efficient and saves time when there is no need to travel anywhere and can effortlessly book interviews."
Person B	"Efficiency has remained pretty much the same. There is the same number of people involved, and it takes the same time." ... "In recruitments between countries, remote interviews have been more efficient."
Person C	"The good factor is that remote channels also bring efficiency to the process."
Person D	"Video interviews have enhanced, of course, the efficiency plenty and, in a way, also speeded up the process."
Person E	"The remote interviews have been more efficient, but also more boring in my opinion" ... "All extra activities are being left out, such as getting a cup of coffee or having a tour in the production side."
Person F	"Remote recruitment has been very effective. It's much easier to schedule interviews, even in the middle of the day, without having to move around."
Person G	"No change. Some of the positions are still as challenging to fulfill, and some jobs are still as easy."

The overall viewing is that the remote interview activities, such as the Microsoft Teams interviews, have increased the recruitment processes lead-in efficiency. Interviewee G, who says that there is no change in efficiency, also discussed earlier that they had remote recruitments before the COVID-19 pandemic. However, interviewee G also noted that remote recruitments are more efficient and are why they have had them in the past.

Interviewee B discusses the increases and decreases in recruitment process efficiency during the COVID-19 pandemic. Interviewee B believes that there are benefits in both remote recruitments and traditional face-to-face recruitments and that they would preferably include both models in the future.

*“When recruiting more people at once, you have to interview many candidates. These were previously conducted as group interviews, so some of the interviews were held with the whole group simultaneously and then shorter individual interviews. It was great to **save time**, but now it's challenging to have a group interview remotely”... “The most significant advantage in group interviews is that we can include tasks that show **how the interviewees act in group** situations or as part of a team.” – B*

Interviewees A, B and D mention that video interviews have enhanced recruitment efficiency, especially when recruiting between countries. Interviewee A discussed how they used to have the recruiters and recruiting supervisor in the same room, even though the interview with the candidate would have occurred remotely. Therefore, having all the participants in different locations and attending remotely has increased their effectiveness significantly. Interviewee D elaborates on the benefits further as follows:

“Video interviews have been highly enhanced and, of course, more efficient, especially for international recruits. Usually, we interview the shortlist, which is 5-6 candidates who want to be interviewed face to face. It was quite a hassle to travel,

*and it took time. Now it is possible to interview them all on the same day, even for a few hours, it has been highly effective, and it **will definitely stay in use.**" – D*

Interviewee F also discussed the benefits and efficiency of remote recruitment processes during the COVID-19 pandemic. The interviewee mentioned it being much easier to schedule interviews, even in the middle of the day, since the interviewees do not need to move around. Interviewee F mainly does proactive and attraction-focused recruiting, which is also more accessible now that the people work from home and not at the offices.

" It's much easier to schedule interviews now and arrange them in the middle of the day. People don't have to move and might be able to answer the phone better because sometimes, in an open office, when a recruiter from another company calls, it can be tricky to answer the phone. So, in a sense, it has simplified handling these matters during the working hours even if changing companies." – F

However, interviewees D, E, and F say that the downside of remote recruitment is that the candidates do not want to visit the office face-to-face during the recruitment process. Interviewee E discusses that they have invited on the spot all those who have made it to the second round in the recruitment process and that it is extremely unfortunate if they do not want to come over.

"It's essential that we get to show the candidates our products and facilities and that we get the candidates excited that 'hey this is a great environment to work in'". – E

Interviewee D also discussed how the emotional connection is easier to build during face-to-face interviews. Additionally, the interviewee mentioned their products' impacts and how they would like to share them with the candidates. Interviewee D also emphasized the role of face-to-face interviews while approaching candidates through headhunters or other proactive channels:

*“Especially when it comes to headhunting processes, **we are always selling ourselves and the position.** We also have well-known candidates who may not have any reason to leave their current job. So, it’s much easier to build contact and trust face-to-face than when chatting over a video.” – D*

Interviewee F also discussed how their offices and especially HQ are magnificent. Since the offices and facilities are one of their assets, the interviewee feels like they are a “losing” party in remote recruitment processes. Further, interviewee F emphasized how the offices show what kind the employer and company’s working culture. Employee well-being is vital for their company. Interviewee F believes that their fitness centers, comfort areas, and comfortable business premises show how they care about their employees and well-being. Therefore, they would like to meet the candidates in person during the recruitment process.

4.4 Future – post-pandemic ‘new normal’

When discussing the future post-pandemic recruitment processes and working modes, all the interviewees mentioned hybrid models. The hybrid model seems to be something that every interviewee believes will be a part of changing work in the future. Interviewee D believes that the recruitment processes will follow the working patterns. For example, the recruitment processes will continue as remote processes if the work is done entirely remotely. The recruitment processes will adapt to hybrid methods if the company has a hybrid model. Whereas if the work is done entirely at the offices, the recruitment processes will shift to more traditional face-to-face recruitments. Interviewee D also believes that the organizational culture will influence this in the future:

“If we were a completely virtual organization where people would never meet each other, then maybe it wouldn't be so relevant to work at the office. But yes, we still believe that face-to-face contact is essential in the future.” – D

Interviewee F also believes that the hybrid model is the approach for future recruitment processes and working modes. Interviewee F believes that both modes of operations have their benefits and combining them in the future will provide the best outcomes.

*“The trend word hybrid is probably the answer indeed, the fact that now people know how easy and convenient it is when there is no need to move from place A to place B and can do things **easier and more cost-effective.**” – F*

All the interviewees also acknowledge the importance of face-to-face contacts in recruitment processes. Interviewee B and interviewee C both believe that the international recruitments will continue to be held remotely as long as someone in the company has met the candidate face-to-face. However, they would like to meet otherwise the candidates during the recruitment process.

Most informants commonly presented a theory for the post-pandemic recruitment processes that remote recruitment activities, such as video interviews, will be utilized in the first rounds of the recruitment process and interviews. Thus, the recruiters will meet the candidates before a job offer, which means the process would start remotely but end face-to-face.

“I see that these modern tools bring above all efficiency and scope to the beginning of the process.” – D

Many interviewees also believe that the future will hold much more advanced remote recruitment tools than the commonly mentioned video interviews. Interviewee A believes that the processes will be as automated as possible. Interviewee C believes that the online assessment will stay as online assessments in the future and will be enhanced further. Interviewee D also discussed more advanced tools incorporated into the recruitment processes. Interviewee D believes that the upcoming tools are not directly created

due to the pandemic but more generally related to technological development and changing work and would have been created with or without the COVID-19 pandemic. Interviewee D also discusses more artificial intelligence tools:

*“There are some exciting developments in the field of **artificial intelligence or ARVR** [Augmented reality and Virtual Reality] that are **not directly brought by the pandemic** but may have accelerated their development. But yes, I see that they will bring a lot more to recruitment processes in the future and specifically to finding and raking suitable candidates, which is what headhunters do. They can probably use them more when searching candidates from different networks or organizing some recruitment events virtually in some artificial reality.” – D*

Interviewee F believes that in the future, these remote recruitment tools can be exploited in international recruitments as well. Thus, they have not done yet during the pandemic. Interviewee F discussed their company being part of a global company group. Such remote recruitment tools and working tools can help in “crisscross” recruitments within Europe and enhance job rotation within the organization.

Interviewee G also discusses the development of new recruitment tools and the recruitment processes in the future. Interviewee G believes the recruitment processes will shift from posting job advertisements online into utilizing more virtual tools and proactive approaches. Interviewee G also discusses how they have changed their recruitments processes into more dynamic during the past couple of years but believes that the change would have occurred without the pandemic.

4.5 Other challenges and opportunities

The interviewees also brought up other challenges and opportunities that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic. All the mentioned factors might not directly affect the recruitment processes or have occurred due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, they are

linked to the changing work circumstances and have indirectly influenced the recruitment processes' functions or the interviewees' work while the pandemic has been active.

Interviewee A mentioned that diversity, equity, and inclusion were hot topics in HR and recruitment discussions during past years. The aim is to have both male and female applicants for different tasks, even though their field is typically more male dominant. This change requires implementing changing work processes at every level and starting by promoting jobs and fields to younger generations during their elementary school. Interviewee G discussed the same topics as well. Interviewee A states that:

“Especially if we talk about managerial roles we want to see if we have real equality and make changes if not.”

Interviewees B, C, E, F, and G mentioned onboarding challenges in remote work settings. New onboarding methods and processes have been developed and implemented and need further improvement. The commonly mentioned challenge is implementing onboarding and training remotely while other co-workers work remotely.

*“It is often not enough that the new employee comes to the office during the onboarding **when the teammates work remotely**. In the early stages, the new employee usually learns the best from colleagues just by following their work. It’s not the same trying to follow remotely through a shared screen.” – B*

Interviewee C also mentioned the onboarding challenges and other challenges. However, many of their jobs cannot be performed remotely, and therefore, the onboarding issues have not been the biggest challenge. Other post recruitment process challenges have been with the management. Nevertheless, Interviewee C brought up the overall challenges to be an HR Vice President remotely or a team supervisor:

“It is much harder to be a remote HR VP or manage a team. You don't meet people face-to-face, and then there is a much more significant burden to organize appointments and scheduling because you can't go through anything at a coffee machine or walk to the office... Everything goes through calendar meetings and appointments, and it quickly complicates and slows down the processes.” – C

Interviewee D also brought up the challenges after the recruitment process. It is significantly more challenging to create employee commitment and integrate the new employee remotely into the new organization.

“Many employees have left quicker during the pandemic or their probationary period. Employee commitment is really challenging to build when a new person starts remotely and is sent to work from home alone. Then it is tough to integrate them into a new work community. It is a challenge related to recruitment and has emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic.” – D

Interviewee E also mentioned challenges in employee commitment. Both interviewees D and E work in the same field and have noticed the competition between the experts in the job markets. Interviewee E says employee commitment is something that needs continuous work since the good employees are being approached by other firms, regardless of the pandemic. Nonetheless, interviewee E also mentioned challenges in employee well-being:

“We have built a lot of traditions like summer parties, and we have sports days and pre-Christmas parties, and more. The fact that such events cannot be held for two years has some significance for it in terms of team spirit and employee motivation.” – E

Interviewee E also believes that remote work affects employee well-being otherwise, through work ergonomics and loneliness. Interviewee E also mentions that events that

have been left out affect employee commitment and retention. Interviewee G discussed employee retention. Interviewee G tells how they have consciously worked towards better employee retention, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Interviewee G states that it is easier to keep a good employee rather than recruit a new one:

“We have had really good employee retention, but we have worked hard for it. It is **easier to keep a person in the house than recruit a new one**, so we emphasize investing in the employee we already have.” – G

Interviewee F discusses that one challenge is and will be luring the employees back to the offices. Even though the discussed hybrid model will also enable working remotely, employees struggle to return to work at offices.

*“Now people have been working remotely for two years, and they have **forgotten the benefits of being in the office**. Especially these long-term employees who are familiar with people and jobs enjoy working at home. So, in a way, people have become **lazy** and only remember the benefits of working remotely but don’t remember why it would be essential to go back there.” – E*

Interviewee E also discusses how employees have forgotten the benefits of working at the office. Interviewee E says this has affected the recruitment processes and complicated proactive recruiting activities. Interviewee E states that people thinking about changing jobs often say that it is risky to change during the pandemic since everyone is working remotely, and you might not get to know people the same way before.

“The new employees often want to go to the office, and they see that it is beneficial. It is easier to integrate into the team and to ask for help from someone face-to-face rather than through Skype. The issue is that the office has only those new employees. All the old employees are comfortable at home and don’t remember the benefits of

*working at the office. Therefore, many good candidates are **hesitant to change jobs now when they don't want to start remotely.***" -E

Interviewee D also states that some additional challenges have occurred while contacting the potential candidates proactively during the COVID-19 pandemic. Interviewee D yet says that it has eased since. The interviewee elaborates that the biggest challenges were faced only at the beginning of the pandemic.

Further, interviewee F and interviewee G believe that it is now easier to recruit proactively. As stated earlier, interviewee F said that it is now easier to schedule interviews since people are working remotely. However, interviewee F and interviewee G say that there was a short period when employees were less willing to change jobs at the beginning of the pandemic. The potential candidates felt a higher risk of losing their job if something unexpected happened. Both interviewees agreed that this was only during the first COVID-19 spring 2020 and had not occurred afterward.

*"As I said earlier, it was difficult to get people to change jobs in that first year of the pandemic **when uncertainty was so significant**, but now it is somehow **surprisingly easy** to get people interested and negotiate on new jobs."* – D

Interviewee D also further continues that the Great resignation, also known as big quit, has been boosting job changes and eased proactive recruitment activities:

*" So, in a way, I would like to connect it [Great Resignation and changing jobs] to **this time and pandemic**, and that something has changed here, and people are now more ready to change jobs. Not at the beginning at all, but it has shifted drastically."* – D

Interviewee F also discussed how their company had an unusual approach compared to other firms at the beginning of the pandemic. Their strategy was to increase the number of recruitments in a controlled manner:

*“In spring 2020, when other companies were putting recruitments on hold, **our strategy was completely different**. We did not at any point put the recruits on hold, and there were no layoffs or terminations. We increased controlled our recruitments and opened new offices. In our opinion, it was a **business move** at a time. We have such a large customer base from so many different industries that the COVID-19 has not had a negative impact on all sectors.” – F*

Interviewee E furthermore believes that now that the economy is starting to pick up after the COVID-19 pandemic, there is intense competition in their field about specific types of employees. The increased demand also contributes to the employees being more likely to change jobs.

Interviewee G believes that their operating model in the business-to-business surface has complicated their processes to find suitable candidates. It might be connected to the COVID-19 pandemic, why there are fewer applicants currently. However, the interviewee believes that the b-2-b setup affects the number of applicants. Therefore, the image of the employer is emphasized:

*“Operating in the b2b surface means that ‘ordinary people’ and potential job seekers don’t know our company. Those in the industry know, of course, but we also want **new people in the industry**. Therefore, our job advertisements, for example, are kept as public as possible in the marketing sense. Websites, career stories, LinkedIn, Facebook, and other social media helps, as well as a public search.” – G*

Lastly, interviewee E mentioned one challenge regarding training supervisors to manage employees in a remote work setting. Interviewee E believes that now that they have

been able to build and create sufficient remote work settings, it will also be exploited in the future, post-pandemic. Additionally, interviewee E believes that another challenge for the company and supervisors is getting people used to being a part of the work community and building communication and interaction at offices again.

5 Conclusions

This chapter will conclude the thesis and summarize its findings. The chapter will also discuss the theoretical and practical contributions. Lastly, the chapter will reflect on the reliability, validity, and limitations of the thesis, and suggestions for future research are discussed.

5.1 Findings

This study aimed to analyze recruitment process evolution and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and changing work. The study also gathered information on expectations for post-pandemic and new-normal recruitment processes by interviewing HR and recruitment professionals. The findings are divided into three sub-chapters based on research questions that were also included as interview questions. The chapters are changes in remote recruitment activities, recruitment process evolution during the pandemic, and presumptions on post-pandemic recruitment processes.

5.1.1 How has the utilization of remote recruitment channels changed during the COVID-19 pandemic?

The use of remote channels during the COVID19-pandemic has increased significantly. The pandemic has changed the recruitment processes and the tools utilized in carrying them out. Many recruiters had previously used remote recruitment tools as a part of changing work, but their use has been at a whole new level during the pandemic. Some of the recruitment processes have been completed entirely remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic, which was unheard of before the pandemic.

One interviewee discussed how their processes and tools had changed very little, but they had noticed a significant difference in the jobseeker's behavior and acceptance of

remote recruitment activities. Previously, using remote recruitment activities was significantly less common, and therefore the jobseekers were not used to processes being partly remotely conducted. Thus, the mindset of job seekers toward remote recruitment processes has also changed during the COVID-19 pandemic to become more accepting.

Remote activities such as remote work have also changed during the pandemic. Jobseekers are asking and even expecting remote work possibilities and asking about them during the recruitment process. Job seekers' perceptions vary regarding whether the remote work possibilities are an incentive to change jobs or a barrier. Some candidates will not want to work in a firm with no remote work possibilities. In contrast, some candidates do not want to switch jobs during the pandemic due to fear of difficulties remotely integrating into the new working community.

Every interviewee agreed facing some challenges in changing recruitment processes and remotely recruiting, especially at the beginning of the pandemic in the spring of 2020. However, informants agreed that the difficulties in the recruitment activities and the challenges of attracting new employees to switch jobs have changed. The situation is now substantially different from two years ago at the pandemic's beginning. The pandemic has changed the recruitment field, and the candidates are more willing to change companies than before the pandemic.

Remote recruitment and telecommunicating have increased the scope of potential candidates, and the location is not as restricting a factor as it used to be. Recruitments over country borders have been less common for now, but the informants believe this will change and develop further in the future.

5.1.2 How have the recruitment processes evolved during changing work and the COVID-19 pandemic?

All the interviewees discussed the explosive usage of remote recruitment channels after the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the general viewing is that the changes would have occurred despite the pandemic and believed that the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the implementation of the new tools. The changing work, digitalization, and development of new tools were on their way before the pandemic. Still, the pandemic changed the scene drastically over a night globally.

The literature review discusses modern recruitment tools. which also arose during the interview discussions. The informants mentioned modern recruitment activities such as attraction recruitment and utilization of SNSs (Social Networking Sites). Melanthiou et al. (2015) and Golovko and Schuman (2019) discuss how SNSs have become a significant part of the employee-recruitment process and attraction process, especially for passive job seekers. The interviewees' responses and viewing align with the literature, and such modern recruitment activities were incorporated into most companies' processes. Informants discussed similar approaches and how in modern recruitment, SNSs, social media posts, and LinkedIn are commonly utilized to encourage passive job seekers and attraction recruitment activities.

Headhunters, consultants, and other external partners are often used in more challenging recruitment positions or when recruiting specific knowledge, such as management positions or niche skillset. The informants' answers aligned with the literature, where Macdonald (1986) and Gorn (2021) state that external help is often utilized when recruiting high-skilled workers with specific knowledge and skills. Nevertheless, interviews also revealed how the use of headhunters has increased in recent years as a part of changing work and has come to a lower level in recruiting, not only when recruiting high-level positions.

This change in using external help more often can be associated to some extent with events caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and changing work. The reasons why finding a certain type of employees and why the competition for them has been increasing can be linked to the changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. During recent years and pandemics, remote work activities have increased, and the workforce is at the center of enabling the needed changes. Multiple interviewees mentioned the challenges of finding certain employees and especially IT professionals. IT skills are related to changing work and the teleworking conditions accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. IT professionals are needed to enable these transitions and develop possible new tools.

5.1.3 What is the future of recruitment processes post-pandemic?

Changes in recruitment processes and the benefits and disadvantages during the COVID-19 pandemic were discussed extensively. Every interviewee agreed that the remote recruitment activities had increased the efficiency and effectiveness of the process. This is aligned with previous studies stating that online recruitment saves time and is more effective for companies (Galanaki, 2002; Bresfelean et al., 2010). Furthermore, it is considered that the remote recruitment activities have not caused more unsuccessful recruitments. Therefore, it can be extrapolated that remote recruitment activities should be included in post-pandemic recruitment processes.

Recruitment professionals would like to include the developed recruitment mode of operations post-pandemic. Much discussed hybrid model will be part of post-pandemic recruitment models and working models. Remote recruitment activities could be utilized at the beginning of the recruitment process to increase efficiency and automation, especially in international recruitment processes. However, all the interviewees also would like to have some traditional recruitment activities and acknowledge the importance of face-to-face communication. Furthermore, it is expected that there will be more enhanced remote recruitment tools in the future that have not been incorporated or developed yet.

The challenges faced at the beginning of the pandemic's recruitments have not been present at the end of the pandemic, such as challenges attracting passive job seekers through headhunters and direct contacts. Therefore, such communications and usage of SNSs can be expected to be exploited in the future. Furthermore, informants believe that the use of headhunters will not decrease in the future. On the contrary, it might continue to be included at even lower levels.

Other challenges that have occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic and challenges that need to be considered in the future arose. Such factors are challenges in onboarding, employee commitment and retention, remote supervising, and employee well-being. Therefore, during the new recruitment processes and changing work circumstances, the effects of the changes in all sectors should be acknowledged. Solutions should be created to solve these issues since it has been stated that some of the changed operation modes will be utilized post-pandemic as well, and these mentioned challenges will therefore occur also.

5.1.4 Theoretical and practical contribution

This study broadens our understanding of recruitment process evolvement during the COVID-19 pandemic and changing work. This study answers the question "How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected recruitment processes evolvement?" by providing a point of view from HR and recruitment professionals. The study also discusses expectations for post-pandemic recruitment processes and therefore gives an insightful perspective on how recruitment processes are performed in the future.

Even though the study was conducted from the employers' point of view, interviewing recruitment professionals, the study gathered important information regarding the job seekers viewpoint. Job seekers are asking and expecting remote work possibilities from their future employers and questioning these matters during the recruitment process.

These expectations for remote work possibilities are something that management, HR and recruitment professionals must consider in the future.

Previous studies have discussed remote recruitment efficiency and effectiveness for over two decades. Galanaki (2002) discussed how online recruitment could be more effective and Bresfelean et al. (2010) stated online recruitment is more cost-effective and less time-consuming. Despite this previously discussed information, it took the COVID-19 pandemic to enforce remote recruitment activities globally. Management should provide needed tools for recruitment professionals to update and improve their recruitment processes to be competitive compared to other competitors and reallocate saved resources to other functions.

Moreover, informants discussed how it is easier and more cost-effective to keep an employee in the company rather than recruit a new employee. Therefore, organizations and HR professionals should consider this, improve their processes, and constantly further develop employee retention. Furthermore, the study shows how new modern recruitment tools such as attraction recruitment have increased, and employees are more likely to change jobs nowadays. Therefore, employee commitment needs continuous work, and organizations must understand that employees are being approached by other firms, regardless of the pandemic.

Study shows that many HR and recruitment professionals have shifted their mindsets and become more open-minded in remote recruitment activities, teleworking, and recruiting from abroad. Such changes should be incorporated into other organizations' recruitment processes to be able to keep up with the changes. Furthermore, providing competitive opportunities and attracting the best employees allows companies to succeed and gain a competitive advantage. The scope of potential employees is being extended to the entire world, whereas it used to be a specific city in a particular country.

Organizations should also provide training opportunities for their employees to manage new challenges encountered by changing work and new operations modes. Nevertheless, managers and supervisors should also develop new skills and tools and receive training regarding new management styles. The study shows that employees in managerial positions face challenges in remote work management which differ significantly from previous management circumstances.

Other challenges the study discovered is employee well-being, employee onboarding and employee commitment. Since the work is changing, new processes are being created, and a hybrid model is something that can be expected to be part of future working modes, new ways of taking care of the employees needs to be created as well. A joint coffee break at the office might not be enough, and employees need other ways of being taken care of. Furthermore, some of the benefits that used to be part of going to the office should be incorporated into remote work circumstances. For example, lunch, coffee, desk, and other factors improve employee commitment and performance.

Recruitment professionals can exploit the findings in this thesis to understand the currently emerging changes that will keep appearing in the future. HR functions and recruitment specialists can primarily utilize the results of this study. Thus, company management should acknowledge the changes occurring in the field of recruitment and therefore enable such changes within the HR department and recruitment processes. As stated in the literature review, companies' success can be tied to the type of individuals it employs and their performance (Dineen & Soltis, 2011; Phillips & Gully, 2015). Providing competitive recruitment activities and processes and attracting the best candidates are linked with companies' success and, therefore, are vital.

Overall, the study confirms the changes occurring during the COVID-19 pandemic and provides insight from HR and recruitment professionals that these changes will stay after the pandemic and were not caused just by the changes and restrictions brought by the pandemic. The study confirms the literature regarding modern recruitment and its role

in the future. The study confirms remote recruitment processes' efficiency and the importance of external help in recruitment processes.

The findings that empirical study revealed that did not emerge in the literature are other tools that are being created and most likely included in recruitment processes in the future. Digitalization and artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and automation brought by it will develop the recruitment processes further post-pandemic. Empirical study also provided important information regarding other challenges that emerged due to remote recruitment and remote working processes that need to be considered in the future.

5.2 Reliability, validity, and limitations

The reliability and validity of this research are being evaluated to understand and quality of the study. According to Saunders et al. (2007, p.149), reliability refers to “the extent to which your data collection techniques or analysis procedures will yield consistent findings.” Saunders et al. (2007, p.150) define validity as “concerned with whether the findings are really about what they appear to be about.” Limitations of the study will also be discussed in this chapter.

The research aimed to study the changes in the recruitment process during the COVID-19 pandemic and changing work. Additionally, the study aimed to understand the remote recruitment process phenomena and its benefits and disadvantages. The research answered the initial questions and provided sufficient information regarding the topic. However, the conducted study includes some limitations as well. Since the research is conducted with a qualitative method, it contains only seven (7) interviewees, and therefore, the results cannot be generalized. Although the result cannot be generalized due to the small sample size, it is possible to state that the results are relevant and reliable information for a particular group. Furthermore, the small sample size fulfils the requirement of a qualitative criterion of qualitative research, and the sample group is of the highest quality possible under the prevailing conditions.

Moreover, the applied theory in this paper is sufficient and in-depth analyzed. Factors affecting validity increasingly are a clearly presented topic and aims for interviewees and providing interview questions beforehand. Furthermore, conducting the interviews in native language, Finnish, there is no language barrier and fewer possibilities for misunderstandings. Each interview started by asking whether there has occurred any confusion or vagueness regarding the questions and making sure that each interviewee has understood each question.

Moreover, the conducted pilot interview before starting the official discussions increases the study's reliability and validity. The interview questions were altered after the pilot interview, and the pilot interview provided an opportunity to rehearse the topic and questions. Further, the possibility of consulting a professional regarding the interview question increased validity. Nevertheless, having the possibility and contacting the interviewees again after the interviews increased the reliability since unclear parts were able to alter and clarified.

To increase the reliability, the interviewees' are nameless, and the company names are not disclosed. Anonymity enables a free atmosphere for the interviewees to speak their minds and experiences freely without worrying about companies' reputations. Additionally, beforehand provided questions enable interviewees to ponder and rehearse their answers and make sure they answer what is being asked. Additionally, the thesis provides evidence of the findings and a script of the interviews.

Every interviewee mentioned remote recruitment processes being more efficient. However, one of the interviewees also said having more unsuccessful recruitment decisions due to the remote recruitment circumstances. A cost-effective recruitment process might be more expensive for the company if a poor recruitment decision is made. Therefore, the study results include also limitations. The entire recruitment process cannot be

same time more efficient and have more unsuccessful recruitments. Unsuccessful recruitment decisions might lead to a less efficient employee or another recruitment process to replace an unsuitable employee.

Furthermore, approximately half of the companies operate in manufacturing fields. Therefore, these companies have tasks that require the presence, and remotely working tasks might be more challenging to perform and thus influenced more by the COVID-19 pandemic. On the contrary, if interviewing mainly IT companies, the results might vary since they have more advanced skill sets to utilize remote recruitment tools and carry out successful remote recruitment processes. Companies with more traditional operation models and less experience in remote recruitment tools might struggle more in recruitment activities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The interviewees were mainly females, which can also affect the validity. Same-gender representatives can often have similar opinions and points of view. However, HR and recruitment are known to be a female-dominated occupations. Therefore, having an accurate division within the field's employees is relevant and increases the validity.

5.3 Future research suggestions

The remote recruitment process evolution and hanging work can be further studied from multiple points of view. For example, the remote recruitment processes or the recruitment process evolution during the COVID-19 pandemic can be studied from the job applicant's point of view. How have the process changes affected them, and has it been challenging to adapt? Based on the study, job seekers have had challenges adapting to remote recruitment processes and understanding the affecting reasons can be beneficial.

Challenges regarding employee commitment, employee retention, and employee well-being were discovered in the study as well while working in a remote work setting.

Therefore, the topic could be further studied from this point of view, and how has the recruitment process changes during the COVID-19 pandemic affected these sectors.

The topic could also be studied within one field. How have the recruitment processes evolved during the COVID-19 pandemic in the IT, retail, or manufacturing sectors? Additionally, the topic could be studied within one international company and compare the changes in the countries' operations.

Other HR-related studies affected by the COVID-19 pandemic that can be studied are managing resistance to change during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, remote work settings, masks at the office, cancelled events, work ergonomics in remote work, etc.

And lastly, future studies could include more interviewees based on the limitations. The research could consist of bigger sample size or be completed as quantitative research. The quantitative analysis could not focus on the phenomena but based on the finding in this thesis, their extensiveness and universality can be studied in a quantitative study.

References

- Acikgoz, Y. (2019). *Employee recruitment and job search: Towards a multi-level integration*. *Human resource management review*, 29(1), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2018.02.009>
- Adikaram, A. S., Naotunna, N. P. G. S. I., & Priyankara, H. P. R. (2021). *Battling COVID-19 with human resource management bundling*. *Employee Relations: The International Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ER-08-2020-0390>
- Allal-Chérif, O., Aranega, A. Y., & Sánchez, R. C. (2021). *Intelligent recruitment: How to identify, select, and retain talents from around the world using artificial intelligence*. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 169, 120822. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2021.120822>
- Allden, N., & Harris, L. (2013). *Building a positive candidate experience: Towards a networked model of e-recruitment*. *Journal of Business Strategy*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JBS-11-2012-0072>
- Argyris, C. (1958). *Some problems in conceptualizing organizational climate: A case study of a bank*. *Administrative science quarterly*, 501-520. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2390797>
- Banfield, P., Kay, R., & Royles, D. (2018). *Introduction to human resource management*. Oxford University Press.
- Backes-Gellner, U. (2004). *Personnel economics: an economic approach to human resource management*. *management revue*, 215-227. Retrieved 2022-03-03 from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/41783466.pdf>
- Berson, C., Laouenan, M., & Valat, E. (2020). *Outsourcing recruitment as a solution to prevent discrimination: A correspondence study*. *Labour Economics*, 64, 101838. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.labeco.2020.101838>
- Bondarouk, T., Parry, E., & Furtmueller, E. (2017). *Electronic HRM: four decades of research on adoption and consequences*. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 28(1), 98-131. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2016.1245672>

- Breaugh, J. A., & Starke, M. (2000). *Research on employee recruitment: So many studies, so many remaining questions*. *Journal of management*, 26(3), 405-434. <https://doi.org/10.1177/014920630002600303>
- Breaugh, J. A. (2008). *Employee recruitment: Current knowledge and important areas for future research*. *Human Resource Management Review*, 18(3), 103-118. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmmr.2008.07.003>
- Breaugh, J. A. (2013). *Employee recruitment*. *Annual review of psychology*, 64, 389-416. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-113011-143757>
- Bresfelean, V. P., Veres, O., & Bologa, C. (2010, November). *Competencies and online recruiting for banking occupations. In Proceedings of the 2010 international conference on Communication and management in technological innovation and academic globalization*. World Scientific and Engineering Academy and Society (WSEAS) (Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 117-122).
- Bretz Jr, R. D., & Judge, T. A. (1992). *The relationship between person-organization fit and career success*. Retrieved 2022-03-01 from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1813/77162>
- Brandão, C., Silva, R., & dos Santos, J. V. (2019). *Online recruitment in Portugal: Theories and candidate profiles*. *Journal of Business Research*, 94, 273-279. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.04.011>
- Boşcai, B. G. (2017). *The evolution of e-recruitment: The introduction of online recruiter*. <https://doi.org/10.18515/dBEM.M2017.n02.ch13>
- Cober, R. T., Brown, D. J., & Levy, P. E. (2004). *Form, content, and function: An evaluative methodology for corporate employment web sites*. *Human Resource Management: Published in Cooperation with the School of Business Administration, The University of Michigan and in alliance with the Society of Human Resources Management*, 43(2 - 3), 201-218. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.20015>
- Collings, D. G., Nyberg, A. J., Wright, P. M., & McMackin J. (2021). *Leading through paradox in a COVID-19 world: Human resources comes of age*. *Human Resource Management Journal*, advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1748-8583.12343>

- Constantin, A. M. (2012). *The antecedents of e-satisfaction and e-loyalty*. Timisoara Journal of Economics, 5(18), 236-252. Retrieved 2022-03-025 from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/260047377_THE_ANTECEDENTS_OF_E-SATISFACTION_AND_E-LOYALTY_AND_THE_RELATIONSHIP_BETWEEN_THEM
- Choudaha, R., Chang, L., & Kono, Y. (2013). *International student mobility trends 2013: Towards responsive recruitment strategies*. World Education News & Reviews, 26(2). Retrieved 2022-03-24 from: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2275946
- Delaney, J. T., & Huselid, M. A. (1996). *The impact of human resource management practices on perceptions of organizational performance*. Academy of Management journal, 39(4), 949-969. <https://doi.org/10.2307/256718>
- Doherty, R. (2010). *Getting social with recruitment*. Strategic HR review. <https://doi.org/10.1108/14754391011078063>
- Douglas, S. P., Craig, C. S., & Nijssen, E. J. (2001). *Executive insights: Integrating branding strategy across markets: Building international brand architecture*. Journal of International Marketing, 9(2), 97-114. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jimk.9.2.97.19882>
- Flinchbaugh, C., Zare, M., Chadwick, C., Li, P., & Essman, S. (2020). *The influence of independent contractors on organizational effectiveness: A review*. Human Resource Management Review, 30(2), 100681. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2019.01.002>
- Ford, J. D., & Ford, L. W. (2010). *Stop blaming resistance to change and start using it*. Organizational Dynamics, 39(1), 24-36. <https://doi.org/doi:10.1016/j.orgdyn.2009.10>
- Franceschini, F., Galetto, M., Pignatelli, A., & Varetto, M. (2003). *Outsourcing: guidelines for a structured approach*. Benchmarking: an international journal. <https://doi.org/10.1108/14635770310477771>
- Fu, M., & Shen, H. (2020). *COVID-19 and corporate performance in the energy industry*. Energy Research Letters, 1(1), 12967. <https://doi.org/10.46557/001c.12967>

- Galanaki, E. (2002). *The decision to recruit online: A descriptive study*. Career development international. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13620430210431325>
- Gilmore, S., & Williams, S. (Eds.). (2012). *Human resource management*. Oxford University Press.
- Golovko, D., & Schumann, J. H. (2019). *Influence of company Facebook activities on recruitment success*. Journal of Business Research, 104, 161-169. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.06.029>
- Gorn, A. (2021). *The role of headhunters in wage inequality: It's all about matching*. Review of Economic Dynamics, 40, 309-346. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.red.2020.10.006>
- Imbun, B. Y. (2009). *Innovative or Proactive Recruitment and Employment Strategies? The Challenges of Shaping Workforces in Papua New Guinea Greenfield Mines*. Research & Practice in Human Resource Management, 17(1)
- Judge, T. A., & Bretz, R. D. (1992). (a) *Effects of work values on job choice decisions*. Journal of applied psychology, 77(3), 261. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.77.3.261>
- James-MacEachern, M. (2018) *A comparative study of international recruitment – tensions and opportunities in institutional recruitment practice*. Journal of Marketing for Higher Education, 28:2, 247-265. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08841241.2018.1471014>
- Kananen, J. (2014). *Laadullinen tutkimus opinnäytetyönä. Miten kirjoitan kvalitatiivisen opinnäytetyön vaihe vaiheelta*. Juvenes Print: Jyväskylä.
- Kathiravan, M., Madhurani, M., Kalyan, S., Raj, R., & Jayan, S. (2021). *A modern online interview platform for recruitment system*. Materials Today: Proceedings. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.matpr.2021.06.459>
- Kekäle, J. (2018). *Proactive strategic recruitment in research groups*. Tertiary Education and Management, 24(2), 144-153. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13583883.2017.1407439>

- Kristof, A. L. (1996). *Person - organization fit: An integrative review of its conceptualizations, measurement, and implications*. *Personnel psychology*, 49(1), 1-49. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.1996.tb01790.x>
- Kucherov, D., & Tsybova, V. (2021). *The contribution of e-recruitment practices to e-recruitment outcomes in Russian companies*. *Measuring Business Excellence*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MBE-02-2021-0017>
- Kumar, R. (2011) *Research Methodology: A Step-by-Step Guide for Beginners*. 3rd Edition. Los Angeles. SAGE.
- Kumar, A., Luthra, S., Mangla, S. K., & Kazançoğlu, Y. (2020). *COVID-19 impact on sustainable production and operations management*. *Sustainable Operations and Computers*, 1, 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.susoc.2020.06.001>
- Kuvaas, B. (2008). *An exploration of how the employee–organization relationship affects the linkage between perception of developmental human resource practices and employee outcomes*. *Journal of Management studies*, 45(1), 1-25. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6486.2007.00710.x>
- Langley, A., & Abdallah, C. (2015). *Templates and turns in qualitative studies of strategy and management*. In *Research methods for strategic management* (pp. 155-184). Routledge. [https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-8387\(2011\)0000006007](https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-8387(2011)0000006007)
- Lee, F. H., Lee, T. Z., & Wu, W. Y. (2010). *The relationship between human resource management practices, business strategy and firm performance: evidence from steel industry in Taiwan*. *The International journal of human resource management*, 21(9), 1351-1372. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2010.488428>
- Macdonald, S. (1986). *Headhunting in high technology*. *Technovation*, 4(3), 233-245. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0166-4972\(86\)90015-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/0166-4972(86)90015-5)
- Malik, A., Pereira, V., & Tarba, S. (2019). *The role of HRM practices in product development: Contextual ambidexterity in a US MNC's subsidiary in India*. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 30(4), 536-564. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2017.1325388>
- Marchington, M., Wilkinson, A., Donnelly, R., & Kynighou, A. (2016). *Human resource management at work*. Kogan Page Publishers.

- Marler, J. H., & Parry, E. (2016). *Human resource management, strategic involvement and e-HRM technology*. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 27(19), 2233-2253. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2015.1091980>
- Melanthiou, Y., Pavlou, F., & Constantinou, E. (2015). *The use of social network sites as an e-recruitment tool*. Journal of Transnational Management, 20(1), 31-49. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15475778.2015.998141>
- Meyer, J. P., Stanley, L. J., & Parfyonova, N. M. (2012). *Employee commitment in context: The nature and implication of commitment profiles*. Journal of vocational behavior, 80(1), 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2011.07.002>
- Michel, A., Todnem By, R., & Burnes, B. (2013). *The limitations of dispositional resistance in relation to organizational change*. Management Decision, 51(4), 761-780. <https://doi.org/10.1108/00251741311326554>
- Miles, R. E., & Snow, C. C. (1984). *Designing strategic human resources systems*. Organizational dynamics, 13(1), 36-52. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0090-2616\(84\)90030-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/0090-2616(84)90030-5)
- Nikolaou, I. (2014). *Social networking web sites in job search and employee recruitment*. International Journal of Selection and Assessment, 22(2), 179-189. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijsa.12067>
- Palazzo, E., & Kleiner, B. H. (2002). *How to hire employees effectively*. Management Research News. <https://doi.org/10.1108/01409170210783106>
- Pastor, I. (2012). *Increasing an Organization's Attractiveness by Promoting its Reputation During the Recruitment Interview Process*. Procedia Economics and Finance, 3, 415-419. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2212-5671\(12\)00173-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2212-5671(12)00173-6)
- Pfeffer, J. (1994), *Competitive Advantage Through People*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston, MA.
- Pfeffer, J., & Veiga, J. F. (1999). *Putting people first for organizational success*. Academy of Management Perspectives, 13(2), 37-48. <https://doi.org/10.5465/ame.1999.1899547>

- Pfeffer, J. (2010). *Building sustainable organizations: The human factor*. Academy of management perspectives, 24(1), 34-45.
<https://doi.org/10.5465/AMP.2010.50304415>
- Phillips, J. M., & Gully, S. M. (2015). *Multilevel and strategic recruiting: Where have we been, where can we go from here?*. Journal of Management, 41(5), 1416-1445.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206315582248>
- Ployhart, R. E., & Moliterno, T. P. (2011). *Emergence of the human capital resource: A multilevel model*. Academy of management review, 36(1), 127-150.
<https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2009.0318>
- Quresh, T. M., Akbar, A., Khan, M. A., Sheikh, R. A., & Hijazi, S. T. (2010). *Do human resource management practices have an impact on financial performance of banks?*. African journal of business management, 4(7), 1281-1288.
<https://doi.org/10.5897/AJBM.9000215>
- Rich, B. L., Lepine, J. A., & Crawford, E. R. (2010). *Job engagement: Antecedents and effects on job performance*. Academy of management journal, 53(3), 617-635.
<https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2010.51468988>
- Rudolph, C. W., Allan, B., Clark, M., Hertel, G., Hirschi, A., Kunze, F., ... & Zacher, H. (2021). *Pandemics: Implications for research and practice in industrial and organizational psychology*. Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 14(1-2), 1-35.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/iop.2020.48>
- Rosoiu, O., & Popescu, C. (2016). *E-recruiting platforms: features that influence the efficiency of online recruitment systems*. Informatica Economica, 20(2).
<https://doi.org/10.12948/issn14531305/20.2.2016.05>
- Rynes, S. L. (1988). *The employment interview as a recruitment device*.
<https://hdl.handle.net/1813/77320>
- Sahay, P. (2014). *Design thinking in talent acquisition: a practitioner's perspective*. Strategic HR Review. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SHR-04-2014-0027>
- Santana, M., Valle, R., & Galan, J. L. (2017). *Turnaround strategies for companies in crisis: Watch out the causes of decline before firing people*. BRQ Business Research Quarterly, 20(3), 206-211. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.brq.2017.01.003>

- Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2007). *Research methods for business students*. FT Prentice Hall.
- Schneider, B. (1987). *The people make the place*. *Personnel psychology*, 40(3), 437-453.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.1987.tb00609.x>
- Schein, E. H. (1996). *Culture: The missing concept in organization studies*. *Administrative science quarterly*, 229-240. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2393715>
- Shen, H., Fu, M., Pan, H., Yu, Z., & Chen, Y. (2020). *The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on firm performance*. *Emerging Markets Finance and Trade*, 56(10), 2213-2230.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1540496X.2020.1785863>
- Schwan, R., & Soeters, J. (1994). *The strategy of vacancy-filling from internal and external labor market sources: An empirical assessment of the recruitment strategy of different types*. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 10(1), 69-85.
[https://doi.org/10.1016/0956-5221\(94\)90038-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/0956-5221(94)90038-8)
- Shneikat, B. (2021). *The Future of International Student Recruitment*. In *Global Perspectives on Recruiting International Students: Challenges and Opportunities*. Emerald Publishing Limited. <http://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-83982-518-720211016>
- Skeens, M. A., Sutherland-Foggio, M., Damman, C., Gerhardt, C. A., & Akard, T. F. (2022). *Facebook recruitment for research of children and parents during the COVID-19 pandemic*. *Applied Nursing Research*, 151574.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apnr.2022.151574>
- Sparrow, P. R., & Braun, W. (2007). *HR sourcing and shoring: strategies, drivers, success factors and implications for HR*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203891391>
- Storey, J. (2014). *New Perspectives on Human Resource Management* (Routledge Revivals). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315740560>
- Strohmeier, S. (2020). *Digital human resource management: A conceptual clarification*. *German Journal of Human Resource Management*, 34(3), 345-365.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2397002220921131/>
- Thomas, B. (2009). *Creative HR solutions for tough economic times*. *Strategic HR Review*.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/14754390910946549>

- Tichy, N. M., Fombrun, C. J., & Devanna, M. A. (1982). *Strategic human resource management*. Sloan Management Review (Pre-1986), 23(2), 47. Retrieved from: <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/strategic-human-resource-management/docview/206802384/se-2?accountid=1479>
- Trochim, W. M., & Donnelly, J. P. (2001). *Research methods knowledge base (Vol. 2)*. Macmillan Publishing Company, New York: Atomic Dog Pub. Retrieved 2021-03-22 from: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/William-Trochim/publication/243783609_The_Rsearch_Metods_Knowledge_Base/links/55db837008aed6a199ac6246/The-Research-Methods-Knowledge-Base.pdf
- Ulrich, D. (1997). *Measuring human resources: an overview of practice and a prescription for results*. Human Resource Management: Published in Cooperation with the School of Business Administration, The University of Michigan and in alliance with the Society of Human Resources Management, 36(3), 303-320.
- Verma, D., & Ahmad, A. (2016). *Employer branding: The solution to create talented workforce*. IUP Journal of Brand Management, 13(1), 42-56. Retrieved from: <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/employer-branding-solution-create-talented/docview/1781343528/se-2?accountid=1479>
- Viljanen, M. A. A. R. I. T., & Latheenmaki, S. (2009). *Good HRM aims, tough consequences: Finnish MNCs reactions to the global financial crisis*. IIRA HRM Study Group Working Papers in Human Resource Management, 24.
- Wolfswinkel, J., Furtmueller, E., & Wilderom, C. (2010). *Reflecting on e-recruiting research using grounded theory*. ECIS 2010 Proceedings. 52. <https://aisel.aisnet.org/ecis2010/52>
- World Health Organization. (2020, 11 March). *Who Director-General's opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19*. Retrieved 2022-01-05 from: [https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-mediabriefing-on-covid-19---11-march-2020 //](https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-mediabriefing-on-covid-19---11-march-2020//)

- Zion, S. R., Louis, K., Horii, R., Leibowitz, K., Heathcote, L. C., & Crum, A. J. (2022). *Making sense of a pandemic: Mindsets influence emotions, behaviors, health, and well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic*. *Social Science & Medicine*, 114889. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2022.114889>
- Zottoli, M. A., & Wanous, J. P. (2000). *Recruitment source research: Current status and future directions*. *Human Resource Management Review*, 10(4), 353–382. [https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S1053-4822\(00\)00032-2](https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S1053-4822(00)00032-2).

Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview questions

Interview questions outline the recruitment process evolution during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. Please, tell me more about you and the company you are working in and how recruitment processes are part of your job description.
2. What is your recruitment process like?
 - a. Where does it typically start?
 - b. Which selectors are involved in decision-making and interviews?
 - c. Do you utilize external help in your recruitment processes? Such as headhunters, consultants, or recruitment companies.
 - d. Has the usage of external help changed during the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. Do you use remote channels for recruitment and, if so, how and has this changed during the COVID-19 pandemic?
 - a. Have new remote recruitment tools been incorporated due to the pandemic?
 - b. Have recruitments made entirely remotely been made?
 - c. Are resources otherwise reallocated?
4. How do you assess the development of recruitment processes during the COVID-19 pandemic? What has changed? What has been possibly good and what has been bad?
 - a. Have you had to suspend/abort any recruitment that has already begun?
 - b. Has it been possible to increase recruitment scope during the pandemic due to teleworking and remote recruitment?
 - c. Do applicants ask for telecommuting possibilities in recruitment processes?
 - d. Has efficiency increased or decreased in recruitment processes during the COVID-19 pandemic and remote recruiting?
 - e. Has there been more unsuccessful recruitments due to the pandemic restrictions and remote recruitment activities?

- f. What do you think has contributed the most to this whole development of recruitment processes in the last couple of years?
 - g. Has remote working affected the employee commitment or attraction recruitment? More or less challenging?
5. What do you see as the new normal recruitment process being after a pandemic?
- a. Will teleworking and remote recruitment remain involved even after the pandemic?
 - b. What do you want to include in the recruitment processes post-pandemic and what do you want to get ride-off?
6. Are there any other challenges or opportunities faced during the COVID-19 that has affected your recruitment processes or work tasks?